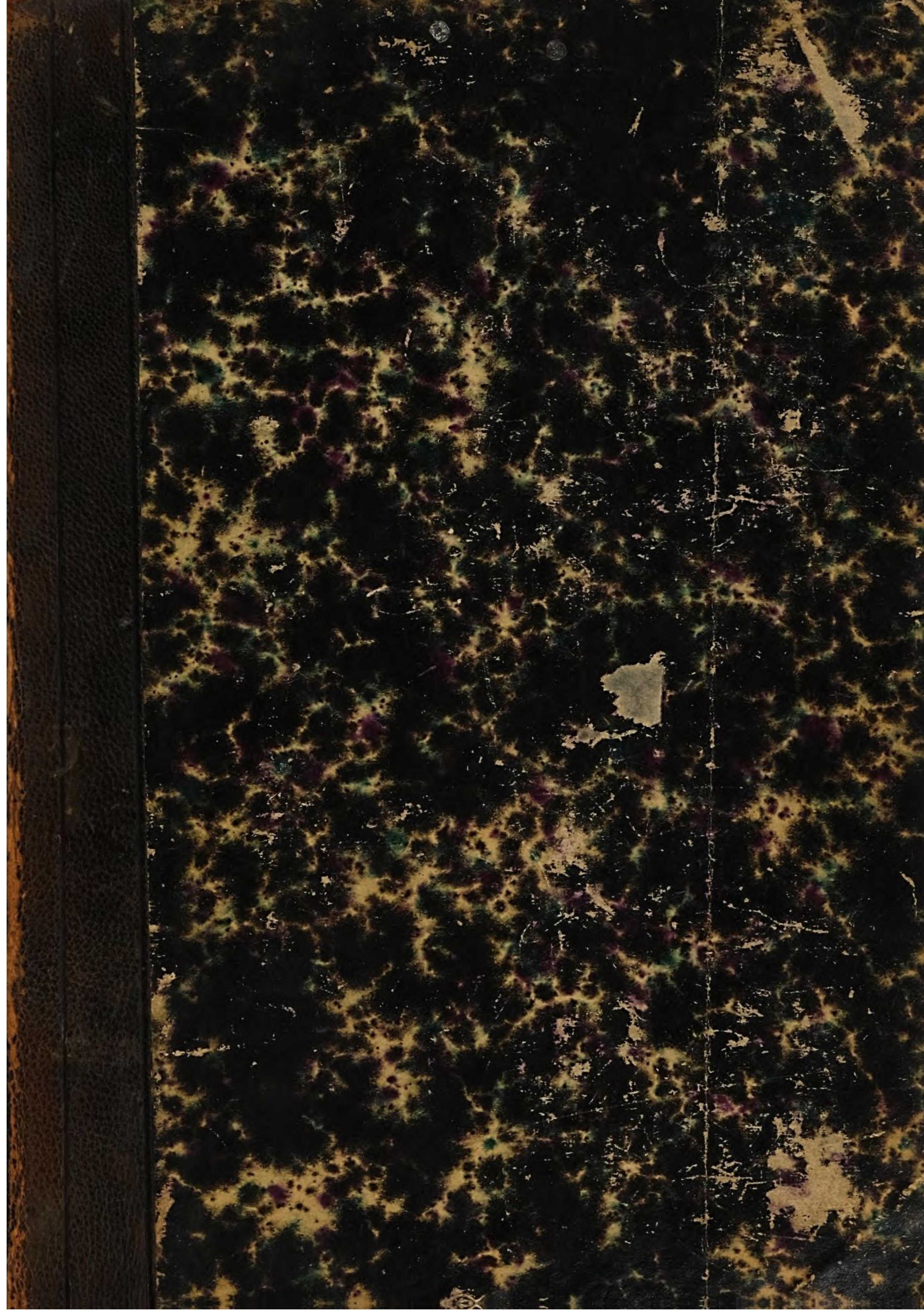




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VOL. 3.

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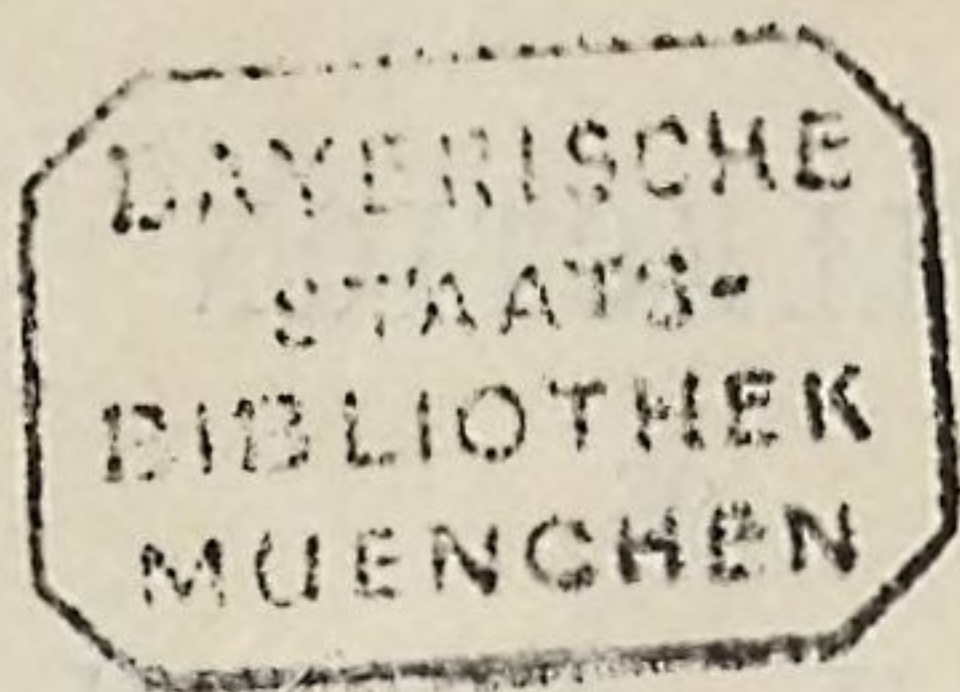
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VOL. III.



THE POETICAL WORKS
OF
ROBERT BROWNING.

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VOL. III.

LYRICS—DRAMAS—ROMANCES.

LEIPZIG
BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1884.



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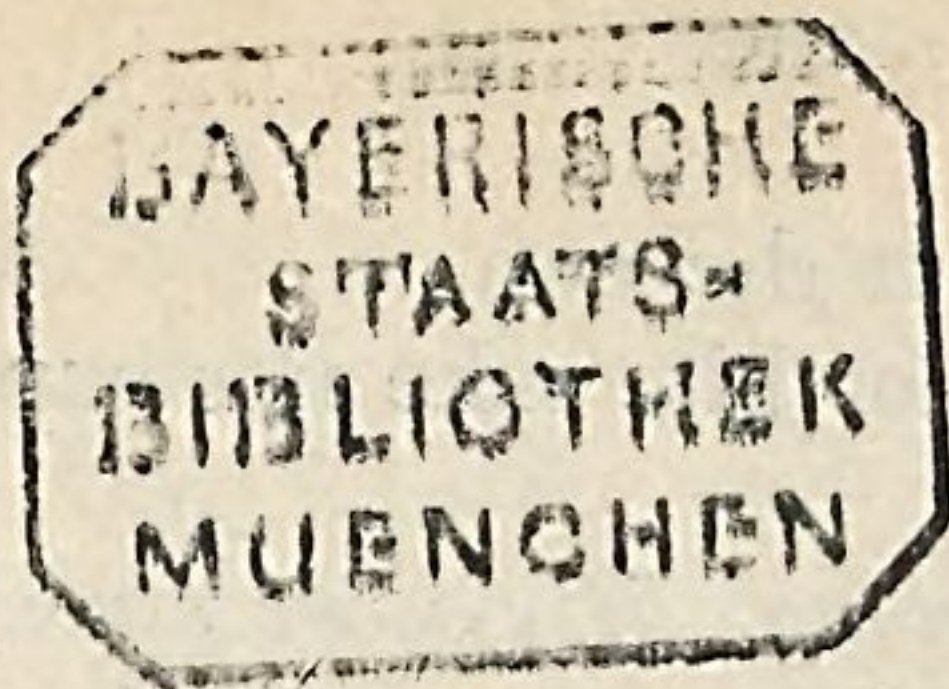
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LYRICS.

J. Y. R. I. C. S.



LYRICS.

CAVALIER TUNES.*

I. MARCHING ALONG.

I.

KENTISH Sir Byng stood for his King,
Bidding the crop-headed Parliament swing:
And, pressing a troop unable to stoop
And see the rogues flourish and honest folk droop,
Marched them along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

II.

God for King Charles! Pym and such carles
To the Devil that prompts 'em their treasonous parles!

* Such Poems as the "Lyrics" in this volume might also come properly enough, I suppose, under the head of "Dramatic Pieces;" being, though often Lyric in expression, always Dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine. — *R. B.*

Cavaliers, up! Lips from the cup,
Hands from the pasty, nor bite take nor sup
Till you're—

(Chorus) *Marching along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.*

III.

Hampden to hell, and his obsequies' knell.
Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young Harry as well!
England, good cheer! Rupert is near!
Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here

(Chorus) *Marching along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song?*

IV.

Then, God for King Charles! Pym and his snarls
To the Devil that pricks on such pestilent carles!
Hold by the right, you double your might;
So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the fight,

(Chorus) *March we along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song!*

II. GIVE A ROUSE.

I.

King Charles, and who'll do him right now?
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?
Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now,
King Charles!

II.

Who gave me the goods that went since?
Who raised me the house that sank once?

Who helped me to gold I spent since?
 Who found me in wine you drank once?

*(Chorus) King Charles, and who'll do him right now?
 King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?
 Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now,
 King Charles!*

III.

To whom used my boy George quaff else,
 By the old fool's side that begot him?
 For whom did he cheer and laugh else,
 While Noll's damned troopers shot him?

*(Chorus) King Charles, and who'll do him right now?
 King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?
 Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now,
 King Charles!*

 III. BOOT AND SADDLE.

I.

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!
 Rescue my castle before the hot day
 Brightens to blue from its silvery grey,

(Chorus) Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!

II.

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you'd say;
 Many's the friend there, will listen and pray
 "God's luck to gallants that strike up the lay—

(Chorus) "Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!"

III.

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,
 Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Roundheads' array:
 Who laughs, "Good fellows ere this, by my fay,
 (*Chorus*) "*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away?*"

IV.

Who? My wife Gertrude; that, honest and gay,
 Laughs when you talk of surrendering, "Nay!
 "I've better counsellors; what counsel they?
 (*Chorus*) "*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*"

THE LOST LEADER.

I.

JUST for a handful of silver he left us,
 Just for a riband to stick in his coat—
 Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,
 Lost all the others, she lets us devote;
 They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver,
 So much was theirs who so little allowed:
 How all our copper had gone for his service!
 Rags—were they purple, his heart had been proud!
 We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured
 him,
 Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
 Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,
 Made him our pattern to live and to die!
 Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,
 Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they watch from
 their graves!

He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,
He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves!

II.

We shall march prospering,—not thro' his presence;
Songs may inspirit us,—not from his lyre;
Deeds will be done,—while he boasts his quiescence,
Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire:
Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,
One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,
One more devils'-triumph and sorrow for angels,
One wrong more to man, one more insult to God!
Life's night begins: let him never come back to us!
There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,
Forced praise on our part—the glimmer of twilight,
Never glad confident morning again!
Best fight on well, for we taught him—strike gallantly,
Menace our heart ere we master his own;
Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,
Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne!

"HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS
FROM GHENT TO AIX."

[16—.]

I.

I SPRANG to the stirrup, and Joris, and he;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three;
"Good speed!" cried the watch, as the gate-bolts
undrew;
"Speed!" echoed the wall to us galloping through;

Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

II.

Not a word to each other; we kept the great pace
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our
place;

I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,
Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique right,
Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

III.

'T was moonset at starting; but while we drew near
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear;
At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see;
At Düffeld, 't was morning as plain as could be;
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-
chime,

So, Joris broke silence with, "Yet there is time!"

IV.

At Aerschot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,
And against him the cattle stood black every one,
To stare thro' the mist at us galloping past,
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,
With resolute shoulders, each butting away
The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray.

V.

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent back
For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track;
And one eye's black intelligence,—ever that glance
O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance!

And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and anon
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on.

VI.

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned; and cried Joris, "Stay spur!
"Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's not in her,
"We'll remember at Aix"—for one heard the quick
wheeze
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering
knees,
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

VII.

So, we were left galloping, Joris and I,
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky;
The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,
'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like
chaff;
Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,
And "Gallop," gasped Joris, "for Aix is in sight!"

VIII.

"How they'll greet us!"—and all in a moment his roan
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone;
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

IX.

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster let fall,
Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all,

Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,
 Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse without peer;
 Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad
 or good,
 Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

X.

And all I remember is, friends flocking round
 As I sat with his head 'twixt my knees on the ground;
 And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,
 As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,
 Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)
 Was no more than his due who brought good news
 from Ghent.

THROUGH
 THE METIDJA TO ABD-EL-KADR.

1842.

I.

As I ride, as I ride,
 With a full heart for my guide,
 So its tide rocks my side,
 As I ride, as I ride,
 That, as I were double-eyed,
 He, in whom our Tribes confide,
 Is descried, ways untried
 As I ride, as I ride.

II.

As I ride, as I ride
 To our Chief and his Allied,

Who dares chide my heart's pride
As I ride, as I ride?
Or are witnesses denied—
Through the desert waste and wide
Do I glide unespied
As I ride, as I ride?

III.

As I ride, as I ride,
When an inner voice has cried,
The sands slide, nor abide
(As I ride, as I ride)
O'er each visioned homicide
That came vaunting (has he lied?)
To reside—where he died,
As I ride, as I ride.

IV.

As I ride, as I ride,
Ne'er has spur my swift horse plied,
Yet his hide, streaked and pied,
As I ride, as I ride,
Shows where sweat has sprung and dried,
—Zebra-footed, ostrich-thighed—
How has vied stride with stride
As I ride, as I ride!

V.

As I ride, as I ride,
Could I loose what Fate has tied,
Ere I pried, she should hide
(As I ride, as I ride)

All that's meant me—satisfied
When the Prophet and the Bride
Stop veins I'd have subside
As I ride, as I ride!

NATIONALITY IN DRINKS.

I.

My heart sank with our Claret-flask,
Just now, beneath the heavy sedges
That serve this pond's black face for mask;
And still at yonder broken edges
O' the hole, where up the bubbles glisten,
After my heart I look and listen.

II.

Our laughing little flask, compelled
Thro' depth to depth more bleak and shady;
As when, both arms beside her held,
Feet straightened out, some gay French lady
Is caught up from life's light and motion,
And dropped into death's silent ocean!

Up jumped Tokay on our table,
Like a pygmy castle-warder,
Dwarfish to see, but stout and able,
Arms and accoutrements all in order;
And fierce he looked North, then, wheeling South,
Blew with his bugle a challenge to Drouth,
Cocked his flap-hat with the tosspot-feather,
Twisted his thumb in his red moustache,

Jingled his huge brass spurs together,
 Tightened his waist with its Buda sash,
 And then, with an impudence nought could abash,
 Shrugged his hump-shoulder, to tell the beholder,
 For twenty such knaves he should laugh but the bolder:
 And so, with his sword-hilt gallantly jutting,
 And dexter-hand on his haunch abutting,
 Went the little man, Sir Ausbruch, strutting!

Here's to Nelson's memory!
 'T is the second time that I, at sea,
 Right off Cape Trafalgar here,
 Have drunk it deep in British Beer.
 Nelson for ever—any time
 Am I his to command in prose or rhyme!
 Give me of Nelson only a touch,
 And I save it, be it little or much:
 Here's one our Captain gives, and so
 Down at the word, by George, shall it go!
 He says that at Greenwich they point the beholder
 To Nelson's coat, "still with tar on the shoulder,
 "For he used to lean with one shoulder digging,
 "Jigging, as it were, and zig-zag-zigging
 "Up against the mizen-rigging!"

GARDEN FANCIES.

I. THE FLOWER'S NAME.

I.

HERE 's the garden she walked across,
 Arm in my arm, such a short while since:

Hark, now I push its wicket, the moss
Hinders the hinges and makes them wince!
She must have reached this shrub ere she turned,
As back with that murmur the wicket swung;
For she laid the poor snail, my chance foot spurned,
To feed and forget it the leaves among.

II.

Down this side of the gravel-walk
She went while her robe's edge brushed the box:
And here she paused in her gracious talk
To point me a moth on the milk-white phlox.
Roses, ranged in valiant row,
I will never think that she passed you by!
She loves you noble roses, I know;
But yonder, see, where the rock-plants lie!

III.

This flower she stopped at, finger on lip,
Stooped over, in doubt, at settling its claim;
Till she gave me, with pride to make no slip,
Its soft meandering Spanish name:
What a name! Was it love or praise?
Speech half-asleep or song half-awake?
I must learn Spanish, one of these days,
Only for that slow sweet name's sake.

IV.

Roses, if I live and do well,
I may bring her, one of these days,
To fix you fast with as fine a spell,
Fit you each with his Spanish phrase;

But do not detain me now; for she lingers
 There, like sunshine over the ground,
 And ever I see her soft white fingers
 Searching after the bud she found.

V.

Flower, you Spaniard, look that you grow not,
 Stay as you are and be loved for ever!
 Bud, if I kiss you 't is that you blow not,
 Mind, the shut pink mouth opens never!
 For while it pouts her fingers wrestle,
 Twinkling the audacious leaves between,
 Till round they turn and down they nestle—
 Is not the dear mark still to be seen?

VI.

Where I find her not, beauties vanish;
 Whither I follow her, beauties flee;
 Is there no method to tell her in Spanish
 June's twice June since she breathed it with me?
 Come, bud, show me the least of her traces,
 Treasure my lady's lightest footfall!
 —Ah, you may flout and turn up your faces—
 Roses, you are not so fair after all!

II. SIBRANDUS SCHAFNABURGENSIS.

I.

Plague take all your pedants, say I!
 He who wrote what I hold in my hand,
 Centuries back was so good as to die,
 Leaving this rubbish to cumber the land;

This, that was a book in its time,
Printed on paper and bound in leather,
Last month in the white of a matin-prime
Just when the birds sang all together,

II.

Into the garden I brought it to read,
And under the arbut and laurustine
Read it, so help me grace in my need,
From title-page to closing line.
Chapter on chapter did I count,
As a curious traveller counts Stonehenge;
Added up the mortal amount;
And then proceeded to my revenge.

III.

Yonder's a plum-tree with a crevice
An owl would build in, were he but sage;
For a lap of moss, like a fine pont-levis
In a castle of the middle age,
Joins to a lip of gum, pure amber;
When he'd be private, there might he spend
Hours alone in his lady's chamber:
Into this crevice I dropped our friend.

IV.

Splash, went he, as under he ducked,
—At the bottom, I knew, rain-drippings stagnate;
Next a handful of blossoms I plucked
To bury him with, my bookshelf's magnate;
Then I went in-doors, brought out a loaf,
Half a cheese, and a bottle of Chablis;
Lay on the grass and forgot the oaf
Over a jolly chapter of Rabelais.

V.

Now, this morning, betwixt the moss
And gum that locked our friend in limbo,
A spider had spun his web across,
And sat in the midst with arms akimbo:
So, I took pity, for learning's sake,
And, *de profundis, accentibus lætis*,
Cantate! quoth I, as I got a rake;
And up I fished his delectable treatise.

VI.

Here you have it, dry in the sun,
With all the binding all of a blister,
And great blue spots where the ink has run,
And reddish streaks that wink and glister
O'er the page so beautifully yellow:
Oh, well have the droppings played their tricks!
Did he guess how toadstools grow, this fellow?
Here's one stuck in his chapter six!

VII.

How did he like it when the live creatures
Tickled and toused and browsed him all over,
And worm, slug, eft, with serious features,
Came in, each one, for his right of trover?
—When the water-beetle with great blind deaf face
Made of her eggs the stately deposit,
And the newt borrowed just so much of the preface
As tiled in the top of his black wife's closet?

VIII.

All that life and fun and romping,
All that frisking and twisting and coupling,

While slowly our poor friend's leaves were swamping
 And clasps were cracking and covers suppling!
 As if you had carried sour John Knox
 To the play-house at Paris, Vienna or Munich,
 Fastened him into a front-row box,
 And danced off the ballet with trousers and tunic.

IX.

Come, old martyr! What, torment enough is it?
 Back to my room shall you take your sweet self.
 Good-bye, mother-beetle; husband-eft, *sufficit!*
 See the snug niche I have made on my shelf!
 A.'s book shall prop you up, B.'s shall cover you,
 Here's C. to be grave with, or D. to be gay,
 And with E. on each side, and F. right over you,
 Dry-rot at ease till the Judgment-day!

 SOLILOQUY OF THE SPANISH CLOISTER.

I.

GR-R-R—there go, my heart's abhorrence!
 Water your damned flower-pots, do!
 If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,
 God's blood, would not mine kill you!
 What? your myrtle-bush wants trimming?
 Oh, that rose has prior claims—
 Needs its leaden vase filled brimming?
 Hell dry you up with its flames!

II.

At the meal we sit together:
Salve tibi! I must hear

Wise talk of the kind of weather,
Sort of season, time of year:
Not a plenteous cork-crop: scarcely
Dare we hope oak-galls, I doubt:
What's the Latin name for "parsley?"
What's the Greek name for Swine's Snout?

III.

Whew! We'll have our platter burnished,
Laid with care on our own shelf!
With a fire-new spoon we're furnished,
And a goblet for ourself,
Rinsed like something sacrificial
Ere 't is fit to touch our chaps—
Marked with L. for our initial!
(He-he! There his lily snaps!)

IV.

Saint, forsooth! While brown Dolores
Squats outside the Convent bank
With Sanchicha, telling stories,
Steeping tresses in the tank,
Blue-black, lustrous, thick like horsehairs,
—Can't I see his dead eye glow,
Bright as 't were a Barbary corsair's?
(That is, if he'd let it show!)

V.

When he finishes refection,
Knife and fork he never lays
Cross-wise, to my recollection,
As do I, in Jesu's praise.

I the Trinity illustrate,
 Drinking watered orange-pulp—
 In three sips the Arian frustrate;
 While he drains his at one gulp.

VI.

Oh, those melons? If he's able
 We're to have a feast! so nice!
 One goes to the Abbot's table,
 All of us get each a slice.
 How go on your flowers? None double?
 Not one fruit-sort can you spy?
 Strange!—And I, too, at such trouble
 Keep them close-nipped on the sly!

VII.

There's a great text in Galatians,
 Once you trip on it, entails
 Twenty-nine distinct damnations,
 One sure, if another fails:
 If I trip him just a-dying,
 Sure of heaven as sure can be,
 Spin him round and send him flying
 Off to hell, a Manichee?

VIII.

Or, my scrofulous French novel
 On grey paper with blunt type!
 Simply glance at it, you grovel
 Hand and foot in Belial's gripe:
 If I double down its pages
 At the woeful sixteenth print,
 When he gathers his greengages,
 Ope a sieve and slip it in't?

IX.

Or, there's Satan!—one might venture
 Pledge one's soul to him, yet leave
 Such a flaw in the indenture
 As he'd miss till, past retrieve,
 Blasted lay that rose-acacia
 We're so proud of! *Hy, Zy, Hine . . .*
 'St, there's Vespers! *Plena gratiâ*
Ave, Virgo! Gr-r-r—you swine!

THE LABORATORY.

ANCIEN RÉGIME.

I.

Now that I, tying thy glass mask tightly,
 May gaze thro' these faint smokes curling whitely,
 As thou plieth thy trade in this devil's-smithy—
 Which is the poison to poison her, prithee?

II.

He is with her, and they know that I know
 Where they are, what they do: they believe my tears
 flow
 While they laugh, laugh at me, at me fled to the drear
 Empty church, to pray God in, for them!—I am here.

III.

Grind away, moisten and mash up thy paste.
 Pound at thy powder,—I am not in haste!
 Better sit thus, and observe thy strange things,
 Than go where men wait me and dance at the King's.

IV.

That in the mortar—you call it a gum?
Ah, the brave tree whence such gold oozings come!
And yonder soft phial, the exquisite blue,
Sure to taste sweetly,—is that poison too?

V.

Had I but all of them, thee and thy treasures,
What a wild crowd of invisible pleasures!
To carry pure death in an earring, a casket,
A signet, a fan-mount, a filigree basket!

VI.

Soon, at the King's, a mere lozenge to give
And Pauline should have just thirty minutes to live!
But to light a pastile, and Elise, with her head
And her breast and her arms and her hands, should
drop dead!

VII.

Quick—is it finished? The colour's too grim!
Why not soft like the phial's, enticing and dim?
Let it brighten her drink, let her turn it and stir,
And try it and taste, ere she fix and prefer!

VIII.

What a drop! She's not little, no minion like me!
That's why she ensnared him: this never will free
The soul from those masculine eyes,—say, “no!”
To that pulse's magnificent come-and-go.

IX.

For only last night, as they whispered, I brought
My own eyes to bear on her so, that I thought
Could I keep them one half minute fixed, she would fall
Shrivelled; she fell not; yet this does it all!

X.

Not that I bid you spare her the pain;
Let death be felt and the proof remain:
Brand, burn up, bite into its grace—
He is sure to remember her dying face!

XI.

Is it done? Take my mask off! Nay, be not morose;
It kills her, and this prevents seeing it close:
The delicate droplet, my whole fortune's fee!
If it hurts her, beside, can it ever hurt me?

XII.

Now, take all my jewels, gorge gold to your fill,
You may kiss me, old man, on my mouth if you will!
But brush this dust off me, lest horror it brings
Ere I know it—next moment I dance at the King's!

THE CONFESSIONAL.

[SPAIN.]

I.

It is a lie—their Priests, their Pope,
Their Saints, their . . . all they fear or hope
Are lies, and lies—there! through my door
And ceiling, there! and walls and floor,
There, lies, they lie—shall still be hurled
Till spite of them I reach the world!

II.

You think Priests just and holy men!
Before they put me in this den

I was a human creature too,
With flesh and blood like one of you,
A girl that laughed in beauty's pride
Like lilies in your world outside.

III.

I had a lover—shame avaunt!
This poor wrenched body, grim and gaunt,
Was kissed all over till it burned,
By lips the truest, love e'er turned
His heart's own tint: one night they kissed
My soul out in a burning mist.

IV.

So, next day when the accustomed train
Of things grew round my sense again,
"That is a sin," I said: and slow
With downcast eyes to church I go,
And pass to the confession-chair,
And tell the old mild father there.

V.

But when I falter Beltran's name,
"Ha?" quoth the father; "much I blame
"The sin; yet wherefore idly grieve?
"Despair not—strenuously retrieve!
"Nay, I will turn this love of thine
"To lawful love, almost divine,

VI.

"For he is young, and led astray,
"This Beltran, and he schemes, men say,
"To change the laws of church and state;
"So, thine shall be an angel's fate,

"Who, ere the thunder breaks, should roll
"Its cloud away and save his soul.

VII.

"For, when he lies upon thy breast,
"Thou mayst demand and be possessed
"Of all his plans, and next day steal
"To me, and all those plans reveal,
"That I and every priest, to purge
"His soul, may fast and use the scourge."

VIII.

That father's beard was long and white,
With love and truth his brow seemed bright;
I went back, all on fire with joy,
And, that same evening, bade the boy,
Tell me, as lovers should, heart-free,
Something to prove his love of me.

IX.

He told me what he would not tell
For hope of heaven or fear of hell;
And I lay listening in such pride!
And, soon as he had left my side,
Tripped to the church by morning-light
To save his soul in his despite.

X.

I told the father all his schemes,
Who were his comrades, what their dreams;
"And now make haste," I said, "to pray
"The one spot from his soul away;
"To-night he comes, but not the same
"Will look!" At night he never came.

XI.

Nor next night: on the after-morn,
 I went forth with a strength new-born.
 The church was empty; something drew
 My steps into the street; I knew
 It led me to the market-place:
 Where, lo, on high, the father's face!

XII.

That horrible black scaffold dressed,
 That stapled block . . . God sink the rest!
 That head strapped back, that blinding vest,
 Those knotted hands and naked breast,
 Till near one busy hangman pressed,
 And, on the neck these arms caressed. . . .

XIII.

No part in aught they hope or fear!
 No heaven with them, no hell!—and here,
 No earth, not so much space as pens
 My body in their worst of dens
 But shall bear God and man my cry,
 Lies—lies, again—and still, they lie!

 CRISTINA.

I.

SHE should never have looked at me
 If she meant I should not love her!
 There are plenty . . . men, you call such,
 I suppose . . . she may discover

All her soul to, if she pleases,
And yet leave much as she found them:
But I'm not so, and she knew it
When she fixed me, glancing round them.

II.

What? To fix me thus meant nothing?
But I can't tell (there's my weakness)
What her look said!—no vile cant, sure,
About "need to strew the bleakness
"Of some lone shore with its pearl-seed,
"That the sea feels"—no "strange yearning
"That such souls have, most to lavish
"Where there's chance of least returning."

III.

Oh we're sunk enough here, God knows!
But not quite so sunk that moments,
Sure tho' seldom, are denied us,
When the spirit's true endowments
Stand out plainly from its false ones,
And apprise it if pursuing
Or the right way or the wrong way,
To its triumph or undoing.

IV.

There are flashes struck from midnights,
There are fire-flames noondays kindle,
Whereby piled-up honours perish,
Whereby swollen ambitions dwindle,
While just this or that poor impulse
Which for once had play unstifled
Seems the sole work of a life-time
That away the rest have trifled.

V.

Doubt you if, in some such moment,
As she fixed me, she felt clearly,
Ages past the soul existed,
Here an age 't is resting merely,
And hence fleets again for ages,
While the true end, sole and single,
It stops here for is, this love-way,
With some other soul to mingle?

VI.

Else it loses what it lived for,
And eternally must lose it;
Better ends may be in prospect,
Deeper blisses (if you choose it),
But this life's end and this love-bliss
Have been lost here. Doubt you whether
This she felt as, looking at me,
Mine and her souls rushed together?

VII.

Oh, observe! Of course, next moment,
The world's honours, in derision,
Trampled out the light for ever:
Never fear but there's provision
Of the devil's to quench knowledge
Lest we walk the earth in rapture!
—Making those who catch God's secret
Just so much more prize their capture!

VIII.

Such am I: the secret's mine now!
She has lost me, I have gained her;

Her soul's mine: and thus, grown perfect,
I shall pass my life's remainder.
Life will just hold out the proving
Both our powers, alone and blended:
And then, come the next life quickly!
This world's use will have been ended.

THE LOST MISTRESS.

I.

ALL's over, then: does truth sound bitter
As one at first believes?
Hark, 't is the sparrows' good-night twitter
About your cottage eaves!

II.

And the leaf-buds on the vine are woolly,
I noticed that, to-day;
One day more bursts them open fully
—You know the red turns grey.

III.

To-morrow we meet the same then, dearest?
May I take your hand in mine?
Mere friends are we,—well, friends the merest
Keep much that I resign:

IV.

For each glance of the eye so bright and black,
Though I keep with heart's endeavour,—
Your voice, when you wish the snowdrops back,
Though it stay in my soul for ever!—

V.

Yet I will but say what mere friends say,
Or only a thought stronger;
I will hold your hand but as long as all may,
Or so very little longer!

EARTH'S IMMORTALITIES.

FAME.

SEE, as the prettiest graves will do in time,
Our poet's wants the freshness of its prime;
Spite of the sexton's browsing horse, the sods
Have struggled through its binding osier rods;
Headstone and half-sunk footstone lean awry,
Wanting the brick-work promised by-and-by;
How the minute grey lichens, plate o'er plate,
Have softened down the crisp-cut name and date!

LOVE.

So, the year's done with!
(*Love me for ever!*)
All March begun with,
April's endeavour;
May-wreaths that bound me
June needs must sever;
Now snows fall round me,
Quenching June's fever—
(*Love me for ever!*)

MEETING AT NIGHT.

I.

THE grey sea and the long black land;
And the yellow half-moon large and low;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.

II.

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;
Three fields to cross till a farm appears;
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match,
And a voice less loud, thro' its joys and fears,
Than the two hearts beating each to each!

PARTING AT MORNING.

ROUND the cape of a sudden came the sea,
And the sun looked over the mountain's rim:
And straight was a path of gold for him,
And the need of a world of men for me.

SONG.

I.

NAY but you, who do not love her,
Is she not pure gold, my mistress?
Holds earth aught—speak truth—above her?
Aught like this tress, see, and this tress,

And this last fairest tress of all,
So fair, see, ere I let it fall?

II.

Because, you spend your lives in praising;
To praise, you search the wide world over:
Then why not witness, calmly gazing,
If earth holds aught—speak truth—above her?
Above this tress, and this, I touch
But cannot praise, I love so much!

A WOMAN'S LAST WORD.

I.

LET'S contend no more, Love,
Strive nor weep:
All be as before, Love,
—Only sleep!

II.

What so wild as words are?
I and thou
In debate, as birds are,
Hawk on bough!

III.

See the creature stalking
While we speak!
Hush and hide the talking,
Cheek on cheek!

IV.

What so false as truth is,
False to thee?
Where the serpent's tooth is,
Shun the tree—

V.

Where the apple reddens
Never pry—
Lest we lose our Edens,
Eve and I.

VI.

Be a god and hold me
With a charm!
Be a man and fold me
With thine arm!

VII.

Teach me, only teach, Love!
As I ought
I will speak thy speech, Love,
Think thy thought—

VIII.

Meet, if thou require it,
Both demands,
Laying flesh and spirit
In thy hands.

IX.

That shall be to-morrow
Not to-night:
I must bury sorrow
Out of sight:

X.

—Must a little weep, Love,
(Foolish me!)
And so fall asleep, Love,
Loved by thee.

EVELYN HOPE.

I.

BEAUTIFUL Evelyn Hope is dead!
Sit and watch by her side an hour.
That is her book-shelf, this her bed;
She plucked that piece of geranium-flower,
Beginning to die too, in the glass;
Little has yet been changed, I think:
The shutters are shut, no light may pass
Save two long rays thro' the hinge's chink.

II.

Sixteen years old when she died!
Perhaps she had scarcely heard my name;
It was not her time to love; beside,
Her life had many a hope and aim,
Duties enough and little cares,
And now was quiet, now astir,
Till God's hand beckoned unawares,—
And the sweet white brow is all of her.

III.

Is it too late then, Evelyn Hope?
What, your soul was pure and true,
The good stars met in your horoscope,
Made you of spirit, fire and dew—

And, just because I was thrice as old
And our paths in the world diverged so wide,
Each was nought to each, must I be told?
We were fellow mortals, nought beside?

IV.

No, indeed! for God above
Is great to grant, as mighty to make,
And creates the love to reward the love:
I claim you still, for my own love's sake!
Delayed it may be for more lives yet,
Through worlds I shall traverse, not a few:
Much is to learn, much to forget
Ere the time be come for taking you.

V.

But the time will come,—at last it will,
When, Evelyn Hope, what meant (I shall say)
In the lower earth, in the years long still,
That body and soul so pure and gay?
Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,
And your mouth of your own geranium's red—
And what you would do with me, in fine,
In the new life come in the old one's stead.

VI.

I have lived (I shall say) so much since then,
Given up myself so many times,
Gained me the gains of various men,
Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes;
Yet one thing, one, in my soul's full scope,
Either I missed or itself missed me:
And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope!
What is the issue? let us see!

VII.

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while!

My heart seemed full as it could hold?

There was place and to spare for the frank young smile,

And the red young mouth, and the hair's young gold.

So, hush,—I will give you this leaf to keep:

See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand!

There, that is our secret: go to sleep!

You will wake, and remember, and understand.

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS.

I.

WHERE the quiet-coloured end of evening smiles

Miles and miles

On the solitary pastures where our sheep

Half-asleep

Tinkle homeward thro' the twilight, stray or stop

As they crop—

Was the site once of a city great and gay,

(So they say)

Of our country's very capital, its prince

Ages since

Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far

Peace or war.

II.

Now,—the country does not even boast a tree,

As you see,

To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills

From the hills

Intersect and give a name to, (else they run
Into one)
Where the domed and daring palace shot its spires
Up like fires
O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall
Bounding all,
Made of marble, men might march on nor be pressed,
Twelve abreast.

III.

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass
Never was!
Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'erspreads
And embeds
Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,
Stock or stone—
Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe
Long ago;
Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread of shame
Struck them tame;
And that glory and that shame alike, the gold
Bought and sold.

IV.

Now,—the single little turret that remains
On the plains,
By the caper overrooted, by the gourd
Overscored,
While the patching houseleek's head of blossom winks
Through the chinks—
Marks the basement whence a tower in ancient time
Sprang sublime,

And a burning ring, all round, the chariots traced
As they raced,
And the monarch and his minions and his dames
Viewed the games.

V.

And I know, while thus the quiet-coloured eve
Smiles to leave
To their folding, all our many tinkling fleece
In such peace,
And the slopes and rills in undistinguished grey
Melt away—
That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair
Waits me there
In the turret whence the charioteers caught soul
For the goal,
When the king looked, where she looks now, breathless,
dumb
Till I come.

VI.

But he looked upon the city, every side,
Far and wide,
All the mountains topped with temples, all the glades'
Colonnades,
All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts,—and then,
All the men!
When I do come, she will speak not, she will stand,
Either hand
On my shoulder, give her eyes the first embrace
Of my face,
Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech
Each on each.

VII.

In one year they sent a million fighters forth
 South and North,
And they built their gods a brazen pillar high
 As the sky,
Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force—
 Gold, of course.
Oh heart! oh blood that freezes, blood that burns!
 Earth's returns
For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin!
 Shut them in,
With their triumphs and their glories and the rest!
 Love is best.

A LOVERS' QUARREL.

I.

OH, what a dawn of day!
How the March sun feels like May!
 All is blue again
 After last night's rain,
And the South dries the hawthorn-spray.
 Only, my Love's away!
I'd as lief that the blue were grey.

II.

Runnels, which rillels swell,
Must be dancing down the dell,
 With a foaming head
 On the beryl bed
Paven smooth as a hermit's cell;
 Each with a tale to tell,
Could my Love but attend as well.

III.

Dearest, three months ago!
When we lived blocked-up with snow,—
 When the wind would edge
 In and in his wedge,
In, as far as the point could go—
 Not to our ingle, though,
Where we loved each the other so!

IV.

Laughs with so little cause!
We devised games out of straws.
 We would try and trace
 One another's face
In the ash, as an artist draws;
 Free on each other's flaws,
How we chattered like two church daws!

V.

What's in the "Times"?—a scold
At the Emperor deep and cold;
 He has taken a bride
 To his gruesome side,
That's as fair as himself is bold:
 There they sit ermine-stoled,
And she powders her hair with gold.

VI.

Fancy the Pampas' sheen!
Miles and miles of gold and green
 Where the sunflowers blow
 In a solid glow,
And to break now and then the screen—
 Black neck and eyeballs keen,
Up a wild horse leaps between!

VII.

Try, will our table turn?
Lay your hands there light, and yearn
 Till the yearning slips
 Thro' the finger-tips
In a fire which a few discern,
 And a very few feel burn,
And the rest, they may live and learn!

VIII.

Then we would up and pace,
For a change, about the place,
 Each with arm o'er neck:
 'T is our quarter-deck,
We are seamen in woeful case.
 Help in the ocean-space!
Or, if no help, we'll embrace.

IX.

See, how she looks now, dressed
In a sledging-cap and vest!
 'T is a huge fur cloak—
 Like a reindeer's yoke
Falls the lappet along the breast:
 Sleeves for her arms to rest,
Or to hang, as my Love likes best.

X.

Teach me to flirt a fan
As the Spanish ladies can,
 Or I tint your lip
 With a burnt stick's tip
And you turn into such a man!
 Just the two spots that span
Half the bill of the young male swan.

XI.

Dearest, three months ago
When the mesmerizer Snow
 With his hand's first sweep
 Put the earth to sleep,
'T was a time when the heart could show
 All—how was earth to know,
'Neath the mute hand's to-and-fro?

XII.

Dearest, three months ago
When we loved each other so,
 Lived and loved the same
 Till an evening came
When a shaft from the devil's bow
 Pierced to our ingle-glow,
And the friends were friend and foe!

XIII.

Not from the heart beneath—
'T was a bubble born of breath,
 Neither sneer nor vaunt,
 Nor reproach nor taunt.
See a word, how it severeth!
 Oh, power of life and death
In the tongue, as the Preacher saith!

XIV.

Woman, and will you cast
For a word, quite off at last
 Me, your own, your You,—
 Since, as truth is true,
I was You all the happy past—
 Me do you leave aghast
With the memories We amassed?

XV.

Love, if you knew the light
 That your soul casts in my sight,
 How I look to you
 For the pure and true,
 And the beauteous and the right,—
 Bear with a moment's spite
 When a mere mote threatens the white!

XVI.

What of a hasty word?
 Is the fleshly heart not stirred
 By a worm's pin-prick
 Where its roots are quick?
 See the eye, by a fly's-foot blurred—
 Ear, when a straw is heard
 Scratch the brain's coat of curd!

XVII.

Foul be the world or fair
 More or less, how can I care?
 'T is the world the same
 For my praise or blame,
 And endurance is easy there.
 Wrong in the one thing rare—
 Oh, it is hard to bear!

XVIII.

Here's the spring back or close,
 When the almond-blossom blows;
 We shall have the word
 In a minor third
 There is none but the cuckoo knows:
 Heaps of the guelder-rose!
 I must bear with it, I suppose.

XIX.

Could but November come,
Were the noisy birds struck dumb
At the warning slash
Of his driver's-lash—
I would laugh like the valiant Thumb
Facing the castle glum
And the giant's fee-faw-fum!

XX.

Then, were the world well stripped
Of the gear wherein equipped
We can stand apart,
Heart dispense with heart
In the sun, with the flowers unnipped,—
Oh, the world's hangings ripped,
We were both in a bare-walled crypt!

XXI.

Each in the crypt would cry
"But one freezes here! and why?
"When a heart, as chill,
"At my own would thrill
"Back to life, and its fires out-fly?
"Heart, shall we live or die?
"The rest, . . . settle by and by!"

XXII.

So, she'd efface the score,
And forgive me as before.
It is twelve o'clock:
I shall hear her knock
In the worst of a storm's uproar,
I shall pull her through the door,
I shall have her for evermore!

UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY.

(AS DISTINGUISHED BY AN ITALIAN PERSON OF QUALITY.)

I.

HAD I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare,
The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the city-
square;

Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the window
there!

II.

Something to see, by Bacchus, something to hear, at
least!

There, the whole day long, one's life is a perfect feast;
While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it, no more
than a beast.

III.

Well now, look at our villa! stuck like the horn of
a bull

Just on a mountain edge as bare as the creature's
skull,

Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf to pull!
—I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if the hair's
turned wool.

IV.

But the city, oh the city—the square with the houses!
Why?

They are stone-faced, white as a curd, there's some-
thing to take the eye!

Houses in four straight lines, not a single front awry;

You watch who crosses and gossips, who saunters,
who hurries by;
Green blinds, as a matter of course, to draw when the
sun gets high;
And the shops with fanciful signs which are painted
properly.

V.

What of a villa? Though winter be over in March by
rights,
'T is May perhaps ere the snow shall have withered
well off the heights:
You've the brown ploughed land before, where the
oxen steam and wheeze,
And the hills over-smoked behind by the faint grey
olive-trees.

VI.

Is it better in May, I ask you? You've summer all at
once;
In a day he leaps complete with a few strong April
suns.
'Mid the sharp short emerald wheat, scarce risen three
fingers well,
The wild tulip, at end of its tube, blows out its great
red bell
Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for the children to
pick and sell.

VII.

Is it ever hot in the square? There's a fountain to
spout and splash!
In the shade it sings and springs; in the shine such
foam-bows flash

On the horses with curling fish-tails, that prance and
paddle and pash
Round the lady atop in her conch—fifty gazers do not
abash,
Though all that she wears is some weeds round her
waist in a sort of sash.

VIII.

All the year long at the villa, nothing to see though
you linger,
Except yon cypress that points like death's lean lifted
forefinger.
Some think fireflies pretty, when they mix i' the corn
and mingle,
Or thrid the stinking hemp till the stalks of it seem
a-tingle.
Late August or early September, the stunning cicala
is shrill,
And the bees keep their tiresome whine round the
resinous firs on the hill.
Enough of the seasons,—I spare you the months of
the fever and chill.

IX.

Ere you open your eyes in the city, the blessed church-
bells begin:
No sooner the bells leave off than the diligence rattles in:
You get the pick of the news, and it costs you never
a pin.
By and by there's the travelling doctor gives pills, lets
blood, draws teeth;
Or the Pulcinello-trumpet breaks up the market beneath.

At the post-office such a scene-picture—the new play,
 piping hot!
And a notice how, only this morning, three liberal
 thieves were shot.
Above it, behold the Archbishop's most fatherly of
 rebukes,
And beneath, with his crown and his lion, some little
 new law of the Duke's!
Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the Reverend Don
 So-and-so
Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca, Saint Jerome and
 Cicero,
“And moreover,” (the sonnet goes rhyming,) “the skirts
 of Saint Paul has reached,
“Having preached us those six Lent-lectures more
 unctuous than ever he preached.”
Noon strikes,—here sweeps the procession! our Lady
 borne smiling and smart
With a pink gauze gown all spangles, and seven swords
 stuck in her heart!
Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife;
No keeping one's haunches still: it's the greatest plea-
 sure in life.

X.

But bless you, it's dear—it's dear! fowls, wine, at
 double the rate.
They have clapped a new tax upon salt, and what oil
 pays passing the gate
It's a horror to think of. And so, the villa for me,
 not the city!
Beggars can scarcely be choosers: but still—ah, the
 pity, the pity!

Look, two and two go the priests, then the monks with
 cowls and sandals,
 And the penitents dressed in white shirts, a-holding
 the yellow candles;
 One, he carries a flag up straight, and another a cross
 with handles,
 And the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for the better
 prevention of scandals:
Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the
 fife.
 Oh, a day in the city-square, there is no such pleasure
 in life!

A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S.

I.

OH Galuppi, Baldassaro, this is very sad to find!
 I can hardly misconceive you; it would prove me deaf
 and blind;
 But although I take your meaning, 't is with such a
 heavy mind!

II.

Here you come with your old music, and here's all
 the good it brings.
 What, they lived once thus at Venice where the mer-
 chants were the kings,
 Where St. Mark's is, where the Doges used to wed
 the sea with rings?

III.

Ay, because the sea's the street there; and 't is arched
 by . . . what you call

. . . Shylock's bridge with houses on it, where they
kept the carnival:
I was never out of England—it's as if I saw it all.

IV.

Did young people take their pleasure when the sea
was warm in May?
Balls and masks begun at midnight, burning ever to
midday
When they made up fresh adventures for the morrow,
do you say?

V.

Was a lady such a lady, cheeks so round and lips so
red,—
On her neck the small face buoyant, like a bell-flower
on its bed,
O'er the breast's superb abundance where a man might
base his head?

VI.

Well, and it was graceful of them—they'd break talk
off and afford
—She, to bite her mask's black velvet, he, to finger on
his sword,
While you sat and played Toccatas, stately at the
clavichord?

VII.

What? Those lesser thirds so plaintive, sixths diminished,
sigh on sigh,
Told them something? Those suspensions, those solu-
tions—"Must we die?"

Those commiserating sevenths—"Life might last! we can but try!"

VIII.

"Were you happy?"—"Yes."—"And are you still as happy?"—"Yes. And you?"

—"Then, more kisses!"—"Did *I* stop them, when a million seemed so few?"

Hark, the dominant's persistence till it must be answered to!

IX.

So, an octave struck the answer. Oh, they praised you, I dare say!

"Brave Galuppi! that was music! good alike at grave and gay!

"I can always leave off talking when I hear a master play!"

X.

Then they left you for your pleasure: till in due time,
one by one,

Some with lives that came to nothing, some with deeds
as well undone,

Death stepped tacitly and took them where they never
see the sun.

XI.

But when I sit down to reason, think to take my stand
nor swerve,

While I triumph o'er a secret wrung from nature's
close reserve,

In you come with your cold music till I creep thro'
every nerve.

XII.

Yes, you, like a ghostly cricket, creaking where a
house was burned:

“Dust and ashes, dead and done with, Venice spent
what Venice earned.

“The soul, doubtless, is immortal—where a soul can
be discerned.

XIII.

“Yours for instance, you know physics, something of
geology,

“Mathematics are your pastime; souls shall rise in
their degree;

“Butterflies may dread extinction,—you’ll not die, it
cannot be!

XIV.

“As for Venice and her people, merely born to bloom
and drop,

“Here on earth they bore their fruitage, mirth and
folly were the crop:

“What of soul was left, I wonder, when the kissing
had to stop?

XV.

“Dust and ashes!” So you creak it, and I want the
heart to scold.

Dear dead women, with such hair, too—what’s become
of all the gold

Used to hang and brush their bosoms? I feel chilly
and grown old.

OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE.

I.

THE morn when first it thunders in March,
 The eel in the pond gives a leap, they say:
 As I leaned and looked over the aloed arch
 Of the villa-gate this warm March day,
 No flash snapped, no dumb thunder rolled
 In the valley beneath where, white and wide
 And washed by the morning water-gold,
 Florence lay out on the mountain-side.

II.

River and bridge and street and square
 Lay mine, as much at my beck and call,
 Through the live translucent bath of air,
 As the sights in a magic crystal ball.
 And of all I saw and of all I praised,
 The most to praise and the best to see,
 Was the startling bell-tower Giotto raised:
 But why did it more than startle me?

III.

Giotto, how, with that soul of yours,
 Could you play me false who loved you so?
 Some slights if a certain heart endures
 Yet it feels, I would have your fellows know!
 I' faith, I perceive not why I should care
 To break a silence that suits them best,
 But the thing grows somewhat hard to bear
 When I find a Giotto join the rest.

IV.

On the arch where olives overhead
Print the blue sky with twig and leaf,
(That sharp-curved leaf which they never shed)
'Twixt the aloes, I used to lean in chief,
And mark through the winter afternoons,
By a gift God grants me now and then,
In the mild decline of those suns like moons,
Who walked in Florence, besides her men.

V.

They might chirp and chaffer, come and go
For pleasure or profit, her men alive—
My business was hardly with them, I trow,
But with empty cells of the human hive;
—With the chapter-room, the cloister-porch,
The church's apsis, aisle or nave,
Its crypt, one fingers along with a torch,
Its face set full for the sun to shave.

VI.

Wherever a fresco peels and drops,
Wherever an outline weakens and wanes
Till the latest life in the painting stops,
Stands One whom each fainter pulse-tick pains:
One, wishful each scrap should clutch the brick,
Each tinge not wholly escape the plaster,
—A lion who dies of an ass's kick,
The wronged great soul of an ancient Master.

VII.

For oh, this world and the wrong it does!
They are safe in heaven with their backs to it,
The Michaels and Rafaels, you hum and buzz
Round the works of, you of the little wit!

Do their eyes contract to the earth's old scope,
 Now that they see God face to face,
 And have all attained to be poets, I hope?
 'T is their holiday now, in any case.

VIII.

Much they reckon of your praise and you!
 But the wronged great souls—can they be quit
 Of a world where their work is all to do,
 Where you style them, you of the little wit,
 Old Master This and Early the Other,
 Not dreaming that Old and New are fellows:
 A younger succeeds to an elder brother,
 Da Vincis derive in good time from Dellos.

IX.

And here where your praise might yield returns,
 And a handsome word or two give help,
 Here, after your kind, the mastiff girns
 And the puppy pack of poodles yelp.
 What, not a word for Stefano there,
 Of brow once prominent and starry,
 Called Nature's Ape and the world's despair
 For his peerless painting? (see Vasari.)

X.

There stands the Master. Study, my friends,
 What a man's work comes to! So he plans it,
 Performs it, perfects it, makes amends
 For the toiling and moiling, and then, *sic transit!*
 Happier the thrifty blind-folk labour,
 With upturned eye while the hand is busy,
 Not sidling a glance at the coin of their neighbour!
 'T is looking downward that makes one dizzy.

XI.

"If you knew their work you would deal your dole."

May I take upon me to instruct you?

When Greek Art ran and reached the goal,

Thus much had the world to boast *in fructu*—

The Truth of Man, as by God first spoken,

Which the actual generations garble,

Was re-uttered, and Soul (which Limbs betoken)

And Limbs (Soul informs) made new in marble.

XII.

So, you saw yourself as you wished you were,

As you might have been, as you cannot be;

Earth here, rebuked by Olympus there;

And grew content in your poor degree

With your little power, by those statues' godhead,

And your little scope, by their eyes' full sway,

And your little grace, by their grace embodied,

And your little date, by their forms that stay.

XIII.

You would fain be kinglier, say, than I am?

Even so, you will not sit like Theseus.

You would prove a model? The Son of Priam

Has yet the advantage in arms' and knees' use.

You're wroth—can you slay your snake like Apollo?

You're grieved—still Niobe's the grander!

You live—there's the Racers' frieze to follow:

You die—there's the dying Alexander.

XIV.

So, testing your weakness by their strength,

Your meagre charms by their rounded beauty,

Measured by Art in your breadth and length,

You learned—to submit is a mortal's duty.

—When I say “you” ’t is the common soul,
The collective, I mean: the race of Man
That receives life in parts to live in a whole,
And grow here according to God’s clear plan.

XV.

Growth came when, looking your last on them all,
You turned your eyes inwardly one fine day
And cried with a start—What if we so small
Be greater and grander the while than they!
Are they perfect of lineament, perfect of stature?
In both, of such lower types are we
Precisely because of our wider nature;
For time, theirs—ours, for eternity.

XVI.

To-day’s brief passion limits their range;
It seethes with the morrow for us and more.
They are perfect—how else? they shall never change:
We are faulty—why not? we have time in store.
The Artificer’s hand is not arrested
With us; we are rough-hewn, no-wise polished:
They stand for our copy, and, once invested
With all they can teach, we shall see them abolished.

XVII.

’T is a life-long toil till our lump be leaven—
The better! What’s come to perfection perishes.
Things learned on earth, we shall practise in heaven:
Works done least rapidly, Art most cherishes.
Thyself shalt afford the example, Giotto!
Thy one work, not to decrease or diminish,
Done at a stroke, was just (was it not?) “O!”
Thy great Campanile is still to finish.

XVIII.

Is it true that we are now, and shall be hereafter,
 But what and where depend on life's minute?
 Hails heavenly cheer or infernal laughter
 Our first step out of the gulf or in it?
 Shall Man, such step within his endeavour,
 Man's face, have no more play and action
 Than joy which is crystallized for ever,
 Or grief, an eternal petrification?

XIX.

On which I conclude, that the early painters,
 To cries of "Greek Art and what more wish you?"—
 Replied, "To become now self-acquainters,
 "And paint man, man, whatever the issue!
 "Make new hopes shine through the flesh they fray,
 "New fears aggrandise the rags and tatters:
 "To bring the invisible full into play!
 "Let the visible go to the dogs—what matters?"

XX.

Give these, I exhort you, their guerdon and glory
 For daring so much, before they well did it.
 The first of the new, in our race's story,
 Beats the last of the old; 't is no idle quiddit.
 The worthies began a revolution,
 Which if on earth you intend to acknowledge,
 Why, honour them now! (ends my allocution)
 Nor confer your degree when the folks leave college.

XXI.

There's a fancy some lean to and others hate—
 That, when this life is ended, begins
 New work for the soul in another state,
 Where it strives and gets weary, loses and wins:

Where the strong and the weak, this world's congeries,
Repeat in large what they practised in small,
Through life after life in unlimited series;
Only the scale's to be changed, that's all.

XXII.

Yet I hardly know. When a soul has seen
By the means of Evil that Good is best,
And, through earth and its noise, what is heaven's
serene,—

When our faith in the same has stood the test—
Why, the child grown man, you burn the rod,
The uses of labour are surely done;
There remaineth a rest for the people of God:
And I have had troubles enough, for one.

XXIII.

But at any rate I have loved the season
Of Art's spring-birth so dim and dewy;
My sculptor is Nicolo the Pisan,
My painter—who but Cimabue?
Nor ever was man of them all indeed,
From these to Ghiberti and Ghirlandajo,
Could say that he missed my critic-meed.
So, now to my special grievance—heigh ho!

XXIV.

Their ghosts still stand, as I said before,
Watching each fresco flaked and rasped,
Blocked up, knocked out, or whitewashed o'er:
—No getting again what the church has grasped!
The works on the wall must take their chance;
“Works never conceded to England's thick clime!”
(I hope they prefer their inheritance
Of a bucketful of Italian quick-lime.)

XXV.

When they go at length, with such a shaking
 Of heads o'er the old delusion, sadly
 Each master his way through the black streets taking,
 Where many a lost work breathes though badly—
 Why don't they bethink them of who has merited?
 Why not reveal, while their pictures dree
 Such doom, how a captive might be out-ferreted?
 Why is it they never remember me?

XXVI.

Not that I expect the great Bigordi,
 Nor Sandro to hear me, chivalric, bellicose;
 Nor the wronged Lippino; and not a word I
 Say of a scrap of Frà Angelico's:
 But are you too fine, Taddeo Gaddi,
 To grant me a taste of your intonaco,
 Some Jerome that seeks the heaven with a sad eye?
 Not a churlish saint, Lorenzo Monaco?

XXVII.

Could not the ghost with the close red cap,
 My Pollajolo, the twice a craftsman,
 Save me a sample, give me the hap
 Of a muscular Christ that shows the draughtsman?
 No Virgin by him the somewhat petty,
 Of finical touch and tempera crumbly—
 Could not Alesso Baldovinetti
 Contribute so much, I ask him humbly?

XXVIII.

Margheritone of Arezzo,
 With the grave-clothes garb and swaddling barret
 (Why purse up mouth and beak in a pet so,
 You bald old saturnine poll-clawed parrot?)

Not a poor glimmering Crucifixion,
Where in the foreground kneels the donor?
If such remain, as is my conviction,
The hoarding it does you but little honour.

XXIX.

They pass; for them the panels may thrill,
The tempera grow alive and tinglish;
Their pictures are left to the mercies still
Of dealers and stealers, Jews and the English,
Who, seeing mere money's worth in their prize,
Will sell it to somebody calm as Zeno
At naked High Art, and in ecstasies
Before some clay-cold vile Carlino!

XXX.

No matter for these! But Giotto, you,
Have you allowed, as the town-tongues babble it,—
Oh, never! it shall not be counted true—
That a certain precious little tablet
Which Buonarroti eyed like a lover,—
Was buried so long in oblivion's womb
And, left for another than I to discover,
Turns up at last! and to whom?—to whom?

XXXI.

I, that have haunted the dim San Spirito,
(Or was it rather the Ognissanti?)
Patient on altar-step planting a weary toe!
Nay, I shall have it yet! *Detur amanti!*
My Koh-i-noor—or (if that's a platitude)
Jewel of Giamschid, the Persian Sofi's eye;
So, in anticipative gratitude,
What if I take up my hope and prophesy?

XXXII.

When the hour grows ripe, and a certain dotard
 Is pitched, no parcel that needs invoicing,
 To the worse side of the Mont St. Gothard,
 We shall begin by way of rejoicing;
 None of that shooting the sky (blank cartridge),
 Nor a civic guard, all plumes and lacquer,
 Hunting Radetzky's soul like a partridge
 Over Morello with squib and cracker.

XXXIII.

This time we'll shoot better game and bag 'em hot—
 No mere display at the stone of Dante,
 But a kind of sober Witanagemot
 (Ex: "Casa Guidi," *quod videas ante*)
 Shall ponder, once Freedom restored to Florence,
 How Art may return that departed with her.
 Go, hated house, go each trace of the Loraine's,
 And bring us the days of Orgagna hither!

XXXIV.

How we shall prologuize, how we shall perorate,
 Utter fit things upon art and history,
 Feel truth at blood-heat and falsehood at zero rate
 Make of the want of the age no mystery;
 Contrast the fructuous and sterile eras,
 Show—monarchy ever its uncouth cub licks
 Out of the bear's shape into Chimæra's,
 While Pure Art's birth is still the republic's.

XXXV.

Then one shall propose in a speech (curt Tuscan,
 Expurgate and sober, with scarcely an "*issimo*,")
 To end now our half-told tale of Cambuscan,
 And turn the bell-towers' *alt* to *altissimo*:

And fine as the beak of a young beccaccia
 The Campanile, the Duomo's fit ally,
 Shall soar up in gold full fifty braccia,
 Completing Florence, as Florence, Italy.

XXXVI.

Shall I be alive that morning the scaffold
 Is broken away, and the long-pent fire,
 Like the golden hope of the world, unbaffled
 Springs from its sleep, and up goes the spire
 While “God and the People” plain for its motto,
 Thence the new tricolour flaps at the sky?
 At least to foresee that glory of Giotto
 And Florence together, the first am I!

“DE GUSTIBUS—”

I.

YOUR ghost will walk, you lover of trees,
 (If our loves remain)
 In an English lane,
 By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.
 Hark, those two in the hazel coppice—
 A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,
 Making love, say,—
 The happier they!
 Draw yourself up from the light of the moon,
 And let them pass, as they will too soon,
 With the beanflowers' boon,

And the blackbird's tune,
And May, and June!

II.

What I love best in all the world
Is a castle, precipice-encurled
In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine.
Or look for me, old fellow of mine,
(If I get my head from out the mouth
O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands,
And come again to the land of lands)—
In a sea-side house to the farther South,
Where the baked cicala dies of drouth,
And one sharp tree—'t is a cypress—stands,
By the many hundred years red-rusted,
Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'ercrusted,
My sentinel to guard the sands
To the water's edge. For, what expands
Before the house, but the great opaque
Blue breadth of sea without a break?
While, in the house, for ever crumbles
Some fragment of the frescoed walls,
From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.
A girl bare-footed brings, and tumbles
Down on the pavement, green-flesh melons,
And says there's news to-day—the king
Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing,
Goes with his Bourbon arm in a sling:
—She hopes they have not caught the felons.
Italy, my Italy!
Queen Mary's saying serves for me—
 (When fortune's malice
 Lost her, Calais)

Open my heart and you will see
Graved inside of it, "Italy."
Such lovers old are I and she:
So it always was, so shall ever be!

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD.

I.

OH, to be in England
Now that April's there,
And whoever wakes in England
Sees, some morning, unaware,
That the lowest boughs and the brush-wood sheaf
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
In England—now!

II.

And after April, when May follows,
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows!
Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's edge—
That's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over,
Lest you should think he never could recapture
The first fine careless rapture!
And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew
The buttercups, the little children's dower
—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower!

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA.

NOBLY, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the North-West
died away;
Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into Cadiz
Bay;
Bluish 'mid the burning water, full in face Trafalgar lay;
In the dimmest North-East distance dawned Gibraltar
grand and gray;
“Here and here did England help me: how can I help
England?”—say,
Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God to praise
and pray,
While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent over Africa.

SAUL.

I.

SAID Abner, “At last thou art come! Ere I tell, ere
thou speak,
“Kiss my cheek, wish me well!” Then I wished it,
and did kiss his cheek.
And he, “Since the King, O my friend, for thy coun-
tenance sent,
“Neither drunken nor eaten have we; nor until from
his tent
“Thou return with the joyful assurance the King liveth
yet,
“Shall our lip with the honey be bright, with the water
be wet.

“For out of the black mid-tent’s silence, a space of
three days,
“Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants, of prayer
nor of praise,
“To betoken that Saul and the Spirit have ended their
strife,
“And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch sinks
back upon life.

II.

“Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved! God’s child with
his dew
“On the gracious gold hair, and those lilies still living
and blue
“Just broken to twine round thy harp-strings, as if no
wild heat
“Were now raging to torture the desert!”

III.

Then I, as was meet,
Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and rose on my
feet,
And ran o’er the sand burnt to powder. The tent was
unlooped;
I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and under I
stooped;
Hands and knees on the slippery grass-patch, all
withered and gone,
That extends to the second enclosure, I groped my
way on
Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open. Then once
more I prayed,
And opened the foldskirts and entered, and was not
afraid

But spoke, "Here is David, thy servant!" And no
voice replied.
At the first I saw nought but the blackness; but soon
I descried
A something more black than the blackness—the vast,
the upright
Main prop which sustains the pavilion: and slow into
sight
Grew a figure against it, gigantic and blackest of all.
Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the tent-roof, showed
Saul.

IV.

He stood as erect as that tent-prop, both arms stretched
out wide
On the great cross-support in the centre, that goes to
each side;
He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there as, caught in
his pangs
And waiting his change, the king-serpent all heavily
hangs,
Far away from his kind, in the pine, till deliverance
come
With the spring-time,—so agonized Saul, drear and
stark, blind and dumb.

V.

Then I tuned my harp,—took off the lilies we twine
round its chords
Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noontide—those
sunbeams like swords!
And I first played the tune all our sheep know, as, one
after one,
So docile they come to the pen-door till folding be done.

They are white and untorn by the bushes, for lo, they
have fed
Where the long grasses stifle the water within the
stream's bed;
And now one after one seeks its lodging, as star follows
star
Into eve and the blue far above us,—so blue and so far!

VI.

—Then the tune, for which quails on the cornland will
each leave his mate
To fly after the player; then, what makes the crickets
elate
Till for boldness they fight one another: and then, what
has weight
To set the quick jerboa a-musing outside his sand
house—
There are none such as he for a wonder, half bird
and half mouse!
God made all the creatures and gave them our love
and our fear,
To give sign, we and they are his children, one family
here.

VII.

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers, their wine-
song, when hand
Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good friendship, and
great hearts expand
And grow one in the sense of this word's life.—And
then, the last song
When the dead man is praised on his journey—"Bear,
bear him along

“With his few faults shut up like dead flowerets! Are
balm seeds not here
“To console us? The land has none left such as he
on the bier.
“Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother!”—And
then, the glad chaunt
Of the marriage,—first go the young maidens, next,
she whom we vaunt
As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling.—And then,
the great march
Wherein man runs to man to assist him and buttress
an arch
Nought can break; who shall harm them, our friends?—
Then, the chorus intoned
As the levites go up to the altar in glory enthroned.
But I stopped here: for here in the darkness Saul
groaned.

VIII.

And I paused, held my breath in such silence, and
listened apart;
And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered: and
sparkles 'gan dart
From the jewels that woke in his turban at once with
a start
All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies courageous at
heart.
So the head; but the body still moved not, still hung
there erect.
And I bent once again to my playing, pursued it un-
checked,
As I sang,—

IX.

- “Oh, our manhood’s prime vigour! No
spirit feels waste,
“Not a muscle is stopped in its playing nor sinew un-
braced.
“Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock up
to rock,
“The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree, the
cool silver shock
“Of the plunge in a pool’s living water, the haunt of
the bear,
“And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his
lair.
“And the meal, the rich dates yellowed over with gold
dust divine,
“And the locust-flesh steeped in the pitcher, the full
draught of wine,
“And the sleep in the dried river-channel where bulrushes
tell
“That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and
well.
“How good is man’s life, the mere living! how fit to
employ
“All the heart and the soul and the senses for ever
in joy!
“Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father, whose
sword thou didst guard
“When he trusted thee forth with the armies, for
glorious reward?
“Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother, held
up as men sung
“The low song of the nearly-departed, and hear her
faint tongue

"Joining in while it could to the witness, 'Let one more
attest,

"'I have lived, seen God's hand thro' a lifetime, and
all was for best!'

"Then they sung thro' their tears in strong triumph,
not much, but the rest.

"And thy brothers, the help and the contest, the working
whence grew

"Such result as, from seething grape-bundles, the spirit
strained true:

"And the friends of thy boyhood—that boyhood of
wonder and hope,

"Present promise and wealth of the future beyond the
eye's scope,—

"Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch; a people is
thine;

"And all gifts, which the world offers singly, on one
head combine!

"On one head, all the beauty and strength, love and
rage (like the throe

"That, a-work in the rock, helps its labour and lets
the gold go)

"High ambition and deeds which surpass it, fame
crowning them,—all

"Brought to blaze on the head of one creature—King
Saul!"

X.

And lo, with that leap of my spirit,—heart, hand, harp
and voice,

Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow, each bidding
rejoice

Saul's fame in the light it was made for—as when,
dare I say,
The Lord's army, in rapture of service, strains through
its array,
And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot—"Saul!" cried I,
and stopped,
And waited the thing that should follow. Then Saul,
who hung propped
By the tent's cross-support in the centre, was struck
by his name.
Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy summons goes
right to the aim,
And some mountain, the last to withstand her, that
held (he alone,
While the vale laughed in freedom and flowers) on a
broad bust of stone
A year's snow bound about for a breastplate—leaves
grasp of the sheet?
Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunderously down
to his feet,
And there fronts you, stark, black, but alive yet, your
mountain of old,
With his rents, the successive bequeathings of ages
untold—
Yea, each harm got in fighting your battles, each furrow
and scar
Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the tempest—all
hail, there they are!
—Now again to be softened with verdure, again hold
the nest
Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young to the green
on his crest

For their food in the ardours of summer. One long
 shudder thrilled
 All the tent till the very air tingled, then sank and
 was stilled
 At the King's self left standing before me, released
 and aware.
 What was gone, what remained? All to traverse 'twixt
 hope and despair.
 Death was past, life not come: so he waited. Awhile
 his right hand
 Held the brow, helped the eyes left too vacant forth-
 with to remand
 To their place what new objects should enter: 't was
 Saul as before.
 I looked up and dared gaze at those eyes, nor was hurt
 any more
 Than by slow pallid sunsets in autumn, ye watch from
 the shore,
 At their sad level gaze o'er the ocean—a sun's slow
 decline
 Over hills which, resolved in stern silence, o'erlap and
 entwine
 Base with base to knit strength more intensely: so, arm
 folded arm
 O'er the chest whose slow heavings subsided.

XI.

 What spell or what charm,
 (For, awhile there was trouble within me) what next
 should I urge
 To sustain him where song had restored him?—Song
 filled to the verge

His cup with the wine of this life, pressing all that it
yields
Of mere fruitage, the strength and the beauty: beyond,
on what fields,
Glean a vintage more potent and perfect to brighten
the eye
And bring blood to the lip, and commend them the
cup they put by?
He saith, "It is good;" still he drinks not: he lets me
praise life,
Gives assent, yet would die for his own part.

XII.

Then fancies grew rife
Which had come long ago on the pasture, when round
me the sheep
Fed in silence—above, the one eagle wheeled slow
as in sleep;
And I lay in my hollow and mused on the world that
might lie
'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip 'twixt the
hill and the sky:
And I laughed—"Since my days are ordained to be
passed with my flocks,
"Let me people at least, with my fancies, the plains
and the rocks,
"Dream the life I am never to mix with, and image
the show
"Of mankind as they live in those fashions I hardly
shall know!
"Schemes of life, its best rules and right uses, the
courage that gains,

“And the prudence that keeps what men strive for.”
 And now these old trains
 Of vague thought came again; I grew surer; so, once
 more the string
 Of my harp made response to my spirit, as thus—

XIII.

“Yea, my King,”
 I began—“thou dost well in rejecting mere comforts
 that spring
 “From the mere mortal life held in common by man
 and by brute:
 “In our flesh grows the branch of this life, in our soul
 it bears fruit.
 “Thou hast marked the slow rise of the tree,—how
 its stem trembled first
 “Till it passed the kid’s lip, the stag’s antler; then
 safely outburst
 “The fan-branches all round; and thou mindest when
 these too, in turn
 “Broke a-bloom and the palm-tree seemed perfect: yet
 more was to learn,
 “E’en the good that comes in with the palm-fruit. Our
 dates shall we slight,
 “When their juice brings a cure for all sorrow? or
 care for the plight
 “Of the palm’s self whose slow growth produced them?
 Not so! stem and branch
 “Shall decay, nor be known in their place, while the
 palm-wine shall staunch
 “Every wound of man’s spirit in winter. I pour thee
 such wine.

"Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit for! the spirit
be thine!

"By the spirit, when age shall o'ercome thee, thou still
shalt enjoy

"More indeed, than at first when unconscious, the life
of a boy.

"Crush that life, and behold its wine running! Each
deed thou hast done

"Dies, revives, goes to work in the world; until e'en
as the sun

"Looking down on the earth, though clouds spoil him,
though tempests efface,

"Can find nothing his own deed produced not, must
everywhere trace

"The results of his past summer-prime,—so each ray
of the will,

"Every flash of thy passion and prowess, long over,
shall thrill

"Thy whole people the countless, with ardour, till they
too give forth

"A like cheer to their sons, who in turn, fill the South
and the North

"With the radiance thy deed was the germ of. Carouse
in the past!

"But the license of age has its limit; thou diest at last:

"As the lion when age dims his eyeball, the rose at
her height,

"So with man—so his power and his beauty for ever
take flight.

"No! Again a long draught of my soul-wine! Look
forth o'er the years!

"Thou hast done now with eyes for the actual; begin
with the seer's!

- “Is Saul dead? In the depth of the vale make his
tomb—bid arise
“A grey mountain of marble heaped four-square, till,
built to the skies,
“Let it mark where the great First King slumbers:
whose fame would ye know?
“Up above see the rock’s naked face, where the record
shall go
“In great characters cut by the scribe,—Such was
Saul, so he did;
“With the sages directing the work, by the populace
chid,—
“For not half, they’ll affirm, is comprised there! Which
fault to amend,
“In the grove with his kind grows the cedar, whereon
they shall spend
“(See, in tablets ’t is level before them) their praise,
and record
“With the gold of the graver, Saul’s story,—the states-
man’s great word
“Side by side with the poet’s sweet comment. The
river ’s a-wave
“With smooth paper-reeds grazing each other when
prophet-winds rave:
“So the pen gives unborn generations their due and
their part
“In thy being! Then, first of the mighty, thank God
that thou art!”

XIV.

And behold while I sang . . but O Thou who didst
grant me that day,

And before it not seldom hast granted thy help to
 essay,
Carry on and complete an adventure,—my shield and
 my sword
In that act where my soul was thy servant, thy word
 was my word,—
Still be with me, who then at the summit of human
 endeavour
And scaling the highest, man's thought could, gazed
 hopeless as ever
On the new stretch of heaven above me—till, mighty
 to save,
Just one lift of thy hand cleared that distance—God's
 throne from man's grave!
Let me tell out my tale to its ending—my voice to
 my heart
Which can scarce dare believe in what marvels last
 night I took part,
As this morning I gather the fragments, alone with my
 sheep,
And still fear lest the terrible glory vanish like sleep!
For I wake in the grey dewy covert, while Hebron
 unheaves
The dawn struggling with night on his shoulder, and
 Kidron retrieves
Slow the damage of yesterday's sunshine.

XV.

 I say then,—my song
While I sang thus, assuring the monarch, and ever
 more strong
Made a proffer of good to console him—he slowly
 resumed

His old motions and habitudes kingly. The right
hand replumed
His black locks to their wonted composure, adjusted
the swathes
Of his turban, and see—the huge sweat that his coun-
tenance bathes,
He wipes off with the robe; and he girds now his
loins as of yore,
And feels slow for the armlets of price, with the clasp
set before.
He is Saul, ye remember in glory,—ere error had bent
The broad brow from the daily communion; and still,
though much spent
Be the life and the bearing that front you, the same,
God did choose,
To receive what a man may waste, desecrate, never
quite lose.
So sank he along by the tent-prop till, stayed by the
pile
Of his armour and war-cloak and garments, he leaned
there awhile,
And sat out my singing,—one arm round the tent-
prop, to raise
His bent head, and the other hung slack—till I touched
on the praise
I foresaw from all men in all time, to the man patient
there;
And thus ended, the harp falling forward. Then first
I was 'ware
That he sat, as I say, with my head just above his vast
knees
Which were thrust out on each side around me, like
oak roots which please

To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I looked up to
know
If the best I could do had brought solace: he spoke
not, but slow
Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he laid it
with care
Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on my brow:
thro' my hair
The large fingers were pushed, and he bent back my
head, with kind power—
All my face back, intent to peruse it, as men do a
flower.
Thus held he me there with his great eyes that scruti-
nized mine—
And oh, all my heart how it loved him! but where
was the sign?
I yearned—"Could I help thee, my father, inventing a
bliss,
"I would add, to that life of the past, both the future
and this;
"I would give thee new life altogether, as good, ages
hence,
"As this moment,—had love but the warrant, love's
heart to dispense!"

XVI.

Then the truth came upon me. No harp more—no
song more! out-broke—

XVII.

"I have gone the whole round of creation: I saw and
I spoke:

"I, a work of God's hand for that purpose, received in
my brain

"And pronounced on the rest of his handwork—
returned him again

"His creation's approval or censure: I spoke as I saw.

"I report, as a man may of God's work—all's love, yet
all's law.

"Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me. Each
faculty tasked

"To perceive him, has gained an abyss, where a dew-
drop was asked.

"Have I knowledge? confounded it shrivels at Wisdom
laid bare.

"Have I forethought? how purblind, how blank, to the
Infinite Care!

"Do I task any faculty highest, to image success?

"I but open my eyes,—and perfection, no more and
no less,

"In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and God is
seen God

"In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and
the clod.

"And thus looking within and around me, I ever renew

"(With that stoop of the soul which in bending upraises
it too)

"The submission of man's nothing-perfect to God's all-
complete,

"As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to his
feet.

"Yet with all this abounding experience, this deity
known,

"I shall dare to discover some province, some gift of
my own.

"There's a faculty pleasant to exercise, hard to hood-wink,

"I am fain to keep still in abeyance, (I laugh as I think)

"Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it, wot ye, I worst

"E'en the Giver in one gift.—Behold, I could love if I durst!

"But I sink the pretension as fearing a man may o'ertake

"God's own speed in the one way of love: I abstain for love's sake.

"—What, my soul? see thus far and no farther? when doors great and small,

"Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch, should the hundredth appal?

"In the least things have faith, yet distrust in the greatest of all?

"Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,

"That I doubt his own love can compete with it? Here, the parts shift?

"Here, the creature surpass the Creator,—the end, what Began?

"Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this man,

"And dare doubt he alone shall not help him, who yet alone can?

"Would it ever have entered my mind, the bare will, much less power,

"To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the marvellous dower

"Of the life he was gifted and filled with? to make such a soul,

"Such a body, and then such an earth for insphering
the whole?

"And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm tears attest)

"These good things being given, to go on, and give
one more, the best?

"Ay, to save and redeem and restore him, maintain at
the height

"This perfection,—succeed with life's dayspring, death's
minute of night?

"Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul, the
mistake,

"Saul, the failure, the ruin he seems now,—and bid
him awake

"From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to find
himself set

"Clear and safe in new light and new life,—a new
harmony yet

"To be run, and continued, and ended—who knows?
—or endure!

"The man taught enough by life's dream, of the rest
to make sure;

"By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning intensified
bliss,

"And the next world's reward and repose, by the
struggles in this.

XVIII.

"I believe it! 'T is thou, God, that givest, 't is I who
receive:

"In the first is the last, in thy will is my power to
believe.

"All's one gift: thou canst grant it moreover, as
prompt to my prayer

"As I breathe out this breath, as I open these arms to
the air.

"From thy will, stream the worlds, life and nature, thy
dread Sabaoth:

"*I* will?—the mere atoms despise me! Why am I not
loth

"To look that, even that in the face too? Why is it I
dare

"Think but lightly of such impuissance? What stops
my despair?

"This;—'t is not what man Does which exalts him,
but what man Would do!

"See the King—I would help him but cannot, the
wishes fall through.

"Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor
to enrich,

"To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would—
knowing which,

"I know that my service is perfect. Oh, speak through
me now!

"Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst thou
—so wilt thou!

"So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost
crown—

"And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor
down

"One spot for the creature to stand in! It is by no
breath,

"Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins issue
with death!

"As thy Love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved

"Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being
Beloved!

"He who did most, shall bear most; the strongest shall
stand the most weak.

"'T is the weakness in strength, that I cry for! my
flesh, that I seek.

"In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it
shall be

"A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to
me,

"Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever: a Hand
like this hand

"Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See
the Christ stand!"

XIX.

I know not too well how I found my way home in the
night.

There were witnesses, cohorts about me, to left and to
right,

Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen, the alive, the
aware:

I repressed, I got through them as hardly, as strugglingly
there,

As a runner beset by the populace famished for news—
Life or death. The whole earth was awakened, hell
loosed with her crews;

And the stars of night beat with emotion, and tingled
and shot

Out in fire the strong pain of pent knowledge: but I
fainted not,

For the Hand still impelled me at once and supported,
suppressed

All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet, and holy
behest,

Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the earth sank
to rest.

Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had withered from
earth—

Not so much, but I saw it die out in the day's tender
birth;

In the gathered intensity brought to the grey of the
hills;

In the shuddering forests' held breath; in the sudden
wind-thrills;

In the startled wild beasts that bore oft, each with eye
sidling still

Though averted with wonder and dread; in the birds
stiff and chill

That rose heavily, as I approached them, made stupid
with awe:

E'en the serpent that slid away silent,—he felt the new
law.

The same stared in the white humid faces upturned
by the flowers;

The same worked in the heart of the cedar and moved
the vine-bowers:

And the little brooks witnessing murmured, persistent
and low,

With their obstinate, all but hushed voices—"E'en so,
it is so!"

MY STAR.

ALL that I know
Of a certain star
Is, it can throw
(Like the angled spar)
Now a dart of red,
Now a dart of blue;
Till my friends have said
They would fain see, too,
My star that dartles the red and the blue!
Then it stops like a bird; like a flower, hangs furled:
They must solace themselves with the Saturn above it.
What matter to me if their star is a world?
Mine has opened its soul to me; therefore I love it.

BY THE FIRE-SIDE.

I.

How well I know what I mean to do
When the long dark autumn evenings come;
And where, my soul, is thy pleasant hue?
With the music of all thy voices, dumb
In life's November too!

II.

I shall be found by the fire, suppose,
O'er a great wise book as beseemeth age,
While the shutters flap as the cross-wind blows,
And I turn the page, and I turn the page,
Not verse now, only prose!

III.

Till the young ones whisper, finger on lip,

“There he is at it, deep in Greek:

“Now then, or never, out we slip

“To cut from the hazels by the creek

“A mainmast for our ship!”

IV.

I shall be at it indeed, my friends!

Greek puts already on either side

Such a branch-work forth as soon extends

To a vista opening far and wide,

And I pass out where it ends.

V.

The outside-frame, like your hazel-trees—

But the inside-archway widens fast,

And a rarer sort succeeds to these,

And we slope to Italy at last

And youth, by green degrees.

VI.

I follow wherever I am led,

Knowing so well the leader's hand:

Oh woman-country, wooed not wed,

Loved all the more by earth's male-lands,

Laid to their hearts instead!

VII.

Look at the ruined chapel again

Half-way up in the Alpine gorge!

Is that a tower, I point you plain,

Or is it a mill, or an iron forge

Breaks solitude in vain?

VIII.

A turn, and we stand in the heart of things;
The woods are round us, heaped and dim;
From slab to slab how it slips and springs,
The thread of water single and slim,
Through the ravage some torrent brings!

IX.

Does it feed the little lake below?
That speck of white just on its marge
Is Pella; see, in the evening-glow,
How sharp the silver spear-heads charge
When Alp meets heaven in snow!

X.

On our other side is the straight-up rock;
And a path is kept 'twixt the gorge and it
By boulder-stones where lichens mock
The marks on a moth, and small ferns fit
Their teeth to the polished block.

XI.

Oh the sense of the yellow mountain-flowers,
And thorny balls, each three in one,
The chestnuts throw on our path in showers!
For the drop of the woodland fruit's begun,
These early November hours,

XII.

That crimson the creeper's leaf across
Like a splash of blood, intense, abrupt,
O'er a shield else gold from rim to boss,
And lay it for show on the fairy-cupped
Elf-needled mat of moss,

XIII.

By the rose-flesh mushrooms, undivulged
Last evening—nay, in to-day's first dew
Yon sudden coral nipple bulged,
Where a freaked fawn-coloured flaky crew
Of toad-stools peep indulged.

XIV.

And yonder, at foot of the fronting ridge
That takes the turn to a range beyond,
Is the chapel reached by the one-arched bridge
Where the water is stopped in a stagnant pond
Danced over by the midge.

XV.

The chapel and bridge are of stone alike,
Blackish-grey and mostly wet;
Cut hemp-stalks steep in the narrow dyke.
See here again, how the lichens fret
And the roots of the ivy strike!

XVI.

Poor little place, where its one priest comes
On a festa-day, if he comes at all,
To the dozen folk from their scattered homes,
Gathered within that precinct small
By the dozen ways one roams—

XVII.

To drop from the charcoal-burners' huts,
Or climb from the hemp-dressers' low shed,
Leave the grange where the woodman stores his nuts,
Or the wattled cote where the fowlers spread
Their gear on the rock's bare juts.

XVIII.

It has some pretension too, this front,
With its bit of fresco half-moon-wise
Set over the porch, Art's early wont:
'T is John in the Desert, I surmise,
But has borne the weather's brunt—

XIX.

Not from the fault of the builder, though,
For a pent-house properly projects
Where three carved beams make a certain show,
Dating—good thought of our architect's—
'Five, six, nine, he lets you know.

XX.

And all day long a bird sings there,
And a stray sheep drinks at the pond at times;
The place is silent and aware;
It has had its scenes, its joys and crimes,
But that is its own affair.

XXI.

My perfect wife, my Leonor,
Oh heart, my own, oh eyes, mine too,
Whom else could I dare look backward for,
With whom beside should I dare pursue
The path grey heads abhor?

XXII.

For it leads to a crag's sheer edge with them;
Youth, flowery all the way, there stops—
Not they; age threatens and they contemn,
Till they reach the gulf wherein youth drops,
One inch from our life's safe hem!

XXIII.

With me, youth led . . . I will speak now,
No longer watch you as you sit
Reading by fire-light, that great brow
And the spirit-small hand propping it,
Mutely, my heart knows how—

XXIV.

When, if I think but deep enough,
You are wont to answer, prompt as rhyme;
And you, too, find without rebuff
Response your soul seeks many a time
Piercing its fine flesh-stuff.

XXV.

My own, confirm me! If I tread
This path back, is it not in pride
To think how little I dreamed it led
To an age so blest that, by its side,
Youth seems the waste instead?

XXVI.

My own, see where the years conduct!
At first, 't was something our two souls
Should mix as mists do; each is sucked
In each now: on, the new stream rolls,
Whatever rocks obstruct.

XXVII.

Think, when our one soul understands
The great Word which makes all things new,
When earth breaks up and heaven expands,
How will the change strike me and you
In the house not made with hands?

XXVIII.

Oh I must feel your brain prompt mine,
Your heart anticipate my heart,
You must be just before, in fine,
See and make me see, for your part,
New depths of the divine!

XXIX.

But who could have expected this
When we two drew together first
Just for the obvious human bliss,
To satisfy life's daily thirst
With a thing men seldom miss?

XXX.

Come back with me to the first of all,
Let us lean and love it over again,
Let us now forget and now recall,
Break the rosary in a pearly rain,
And gather what we let fall!

XXXI.

What did I say?—that a small bird sings
All day long, save when a brown pair
Of hawks from the wood float with wide wings
Strained to a bell: 'gainst noon-day glare
You count the streaks and rings.

XXXII.

But at afternoon or almost eve
'T is better; then the silence grows
To that degree, you half believe
It must get rid of what it knows,
Its bosom does so heave.

XXXIII.

Hither we walked then, side by side,
Arm in arm and cheek to cheek,
And still I questioned or replied,
While my heart, convulsed to really speak,
Lay choking in its pride.

XXXIV.

Silent the crumbling bridge we cross,
And pity and praise the chapel sweet,
And care about the fresco's loss,
And wish for our souls a like retreat,
And wonder at the moss.

XXXV.

Stoop and kneel on the settle under,
Look through the window's grated square:
Nothing to see! For fear of plunder,
The cross is down and the altar bare,
As if thieves don't fear thunder.

XXXVI.

We stoop and look in through the grate,
See the little porch and rustic door,
Read duly the dead builder's date;
Then cross the bridge that we crossed before,
Take the path again—but wait!

XXXVII.

Oh moment, one and infinite!
The water slips o'er stock and stone;
The West is tender, hardly bright:
How grey at once is the evening grown—
One star, its chrysolite!

XXXVIII.

We two stood there with never a third,
But each by each, as each knew well:
The sights we saw and the sounds we heard,
The lights and the shades made up a spell
Till the trouble grew and stirred.

XXXIX.

Oh, the little more, and how much it is!
And the little less, and what worlds away!
How a sound shall quicken content to bliss,
Or a breath suspend the blood's best play,
And life be a proof of this!

XL.

Had she willed it, still had stood the screen
So slight, so sure, 'twixt my love and her:
I could fix her face with a guard between,
And find her soul as when friends confer,
Friends—lovers that might have been.

XLI.

For my heart had a touch of the woodland-time,
Wanting to sleep now over its best.
Shake the whole tree in the summer-prime,
But bring to the last leaf no such test!
“Hold the last fast!” runs the rhyme.

XLII.

For a chance to make your little much,
To gain a lover and lose a friend,
Venture the tree and a myriad such,
When nothing you mar but the year can mend:
But a last leaf—fear to touch!

XLIII.

Yet should it unfasten itself and fall
Eddying down till it find your face
At some slight wind—best chance of all!
Be your heart henceforth its dwelling-place
You trembled to forestall!

XLIV.

Worth how well, those dark grey eyes,
That hair so dark and dear, how worth
That a man should strive and agonise,
And taste a veriest hell on earth
For the hope of such a prize!

XLV.

You might have turned and tried a man,
Set him a space to weary and wear,
And prove which suited more your plan,
His best of hope or his worst despair,
Yet end as he began.

XLVI.

But you spared me this, like the heart you are,
And filled my empty heart at a word.
If two lives join, there is oft a scar,
They are one and one, with a shadowy third;
One near one is too far.

XLVII.

A moment after, and hands unseen
Were hanging the night around us fast;
But we knew that a bar was broken between
Life and life: we were mixed at last
In spite of the mortal screen.

XLVIII.

The forests had done it; there they stood;
We caught for a moment the powers at play:
They had mingled us so, for once and good,
Their work was done—we might go or stay,
They relapsed to their ancient mood.

XLIX.

How the world is made for each of us!
How all we perceive and know in it
Tends to some moment's product thus,
When a soul declares itself—to wit,
By its fruit, the thing it does!

L.

Be hate that fruit or love that fruit,
It forwards the general deed of man,
And each of the Many helps to recruit
The life of the race by a general plan;
Each living his own, to boot.

LI.

I am named and known by that moment's feat;
There took my station and degree;
So grew my own small life complete,
As nature obtained her best of me—
One born to love you, sweet!

LII.

And to watch you sink by the fire-side now
Back again, as you mutely sit
Musing by fire-light, that great brow
And the spirit-small hand propping it,
Yonder, my heart knows how!

LIII.

So, earth has gained by one man the more,
And the gain of earth must be heaven's gain too;
And the whole is well worth thinking o'er
When autumn comes: which I mean to do
One day, as I said before.

ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND.

I.

My love, this is the bitterest, that thou—
Who art all truth, and who dost love me now
As thine eyes say, as thy voice breaks to say—
Shouldst love so truly, and couldst love me still
A whole long life through, had but love its will,
Would death that leads me from thee brook delay.

II.

I have but to be by thee, and thy hand
Will never let mine go, nor heart withstand
The beating of my heart to reach its place.
When shall I look for thee and feel thee gone?
When cry for the old comfort and find none?
Never, I know! Thy soul is in thy face.

III.

Oh, I should fade—'t is willed so! Might I save,
Gladly I would, whatever beauty gave
Joy to thy sense, for that was precious too.
It is not to be granted. But the soul
Whence the love comes, all ravage leaves that whole;
Vainly the flesh fades; soul makes all things new.

IV.

It would not be because my eye grew dim
Thou couldst not find the love there, thanks to Him
Who never is dishonoured in the spark
He gave us from his fire of fires, and bade
Remember whence it sprang, nor be afraid
While that burns on, though all the rest grow dark.

V.

So, how thou wouldst be perfect, white and clean
Outside as inside, soul and soul's demesne
Alike, this body given to show it by!
Oh, three-parts through the worst of life's abyss,
What plaudits from the next world after this,
Couldst thou repeat a stroke and gain the sky!

VI.

And is it not the bitterer to think
That disengage our hands and thou wilt sink
Although thy love was love in very deed?
I know that nature! Pass a festive day,
Thou dost not throw its relic-flower away
Nor bid its music's loitering echo speed.

VII.

Thou let'st the stranger's glove lie where it fell;
If old things remain old things all is well,
For thou art grateful as becomes man best:
And hadst thou only heard me play one tune,
Or viewed me from a window, not so soon
With thee would such things fade as with the rest.

VIII.

I seem to see! We meet and part; 't is brief;
The book I opened keeps a folded leaf,
The very chair I sat on, breaks the rank;

That is a portrait of me on the wall—
Three lines, my face comes at so slight a call:
And for all this, one little hour to thank!

IX.

But now, because the hour through years was fixed,
Because our inmost beings met and mixed,
Because thou once hast loved me—wilt thou dare
Say to thy soul and Who may list beside,
“Therefore she is immortally my bride;
“Chance cannot change my love, nor time impair.

X.

“So, what if in the dusk of life that’s left,
“I, a tired traveller of my sun bereft,
“Look from my path when, mimicking the same,
“The fire-fly glimpses past me, come and gone?
“—Where was it till the sunset? where anon
“It will be at the sunrise! What’s to blame?”

XI.

Is it so helpful to thee? Canst thou take
The mimic up, nor, for the true thing’s sake,
Put gently by such efforts at a beam?
Is the remainder of the way so long
Thou need’st the little solace, thou the strong?
Watch out thy watch, let weak ones doze and
dream!

XII.

—Ah, but the fresher faces! “Is it true,”
Thou’lt ask, “some eyes are beautiful and new?
“Some hair,—how can one choose but grasp such
wealth?

“And if a man would press his lips to lips
“Fresh as the wilding hedge-rose-cup there slips
“The dew-drop out of, must it be by stealth?

XIII.

“I cannot change the love still kept for Her,
“More than if such a picture I prefer
“Passing a day with, to a room’s bare side:
“The painted form takes nothing she possessed,
“Yet, while the Titian’s Venus lies at rest,
“A man looks. Once more, what is there to chide?”

XIV.

So must I see, from where I sit and watch,
My own self sell myself, my hand attach
Its warrant to the very thefts from me—
Thy singleness of soul that made me proud,
Thy purity of heart I loved aloud,
Thy man’s-truth I was bold to bid God see!

XV.

Love so, then, if thou wilt! Give all thou canst
Away to the new faces—disentranced,
(Say it and think it) obdurate no more;
Re-issue looks and words from the old mint,
Pass them afresh, no matter whose the print
Image and superscription once they bore!

XVI.

Re-coin thyself and give it them to spend,—
It all comes to the same thing at the end,
Since mine thou wast, mine art and mine shalt be,
Faithful or faithless, sealing up the sum
Or lavish of my treasure, thou must come
Back to the heart’s place here I keep for thee!

XVII.

Only, why should it be with stain at all?
Why must I, 'twixt the leaves of coronal,
Put any kiss of pardon on thy brow?
Why need the other women know so much,
And talk together, "Such the look and such
The smile he used to love with, then as now!"

XVIII.

Might I die last and show thee! Should I find
Such hardship in the few years left behind,
If free to take and light my lamp, and go
Into thy tomb, and shut the door and sit,
Seeing thy face on those four sides of it
The better that they are so blank, I know!

XIX.

Why, time was what I wanted, to turn o'er
Within my mind each look, get more and more
By heart each word, too much to learn at first,
And join thee all the fitter for the pause
'Neath the low door-way's lintel. That were cause
For lingering, though thou calledst, if I durst!

XX.

And yet thou art the nobler of us two:
What dare I dream of, that thou canst not do,
Outstripping my ten small steps with one stride?
I'll say then, here's a trial and a task—
Is it to bear?—if easy, I'll not ask:
Though love fail, I can trust on in thy pride.

XXI.

Pride?—when those eyes forestall the life behind
The death I have to go through!—when I find,
Now that I want thy help most, all of thee!

What did I fear? Thy love shall hold me fast
Until the little minute's sleep is past
And I wake saved.—And yet it will not be!

TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA.

I.

I WONDER do you feel to-day
As I have felt since, hand in hand,
We sat down on the grass, to stray
In spirit better through the land,
This morn of Rome and May?

II.

For me, I touched a thought, I know,
Has tantalized me many times,
(Like turns of thread the spiders throw
Mocking across our path) for rhymes
To catch at and let go.

III.

Help me to hold it! First it left
The yellowing fennel, run to seed
There, branching from the brickwork's cleft,
Some old tomb's ruin: yonder weed
Took up the floating weft,

IV.

Where one small orange cup amassed
Five beetles,—blind and green they grope
Among the honey-meal: and last,
Everywhere on the grassy slope
I traced it. Hold it fast!

V.

The champaign with its endless fleece
Of feathery grasses everywhere!
Silence and passion, joy and peace,
An everlasting wash of air—
Rome's ghost since her decease.

VI.

Such life here, through such lengths of hours,
Such miracles performed in play,
Such primal naked forms of flowers,
Such letting nature have her way
While heaven looks from its towers!

VII.

How say you? Let us, O my dove,
Let us be unashamed of soul,
As earth lies bare to heaven above!
How is it under our control
To love or not to love?

VIII.

I would that you were all to me,
You that are just so much, no more.
Nor yours nor mine, nor slave nor free!
Where does the fault lie? What the core
O' the wound, since wound must be?

IX.

I would I could adopt your will,
See with your eyes, and set my heart
Beating by yours, and drink my fill
At your soul's springs,—your part, my part
In life, for good and ill.

X.

No. I yearn upward, touch you close,
 Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,
 Catch your soul's warmth,—I pluck the rose
 And love it more than tongue can speak—
 Then the good minute goes.

XI.

Already how am I so far
 Out of that minute? Must I go
 Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,
 Onward, whenever light winds blow,
 Fixed by no friendly star?

XII.

Just when I seemed about to learn!
 Where is the thread now? Off again!
 The old trick! Only I discern—
 Infinite passion, and the pain
 Of finite hearts that yearn.

 MISCONCEPTIONS.

I.

THIS is a spray the Bird clung to,
 Making it blossom with pleasure,
 Ere the high tree-top she sprung to,
 Fit for her nest and her treasure.
 Oh, what a hope beyond measure
 Was the poor spray's, which the flying feet hung to,—
 So to be singled out, built in, and sung to!

II.

This is a heart the Queen leant on,
Thrilled in a minute erratic,
Ere the true bosom she bent on,
Meet for love's regal dalmatic.
Oh, what a fancy ecstatic
Was the poor heart's, ere the wanderer went on—
Love to be saved for it, proffered to, spent on!

A SERENADE AT THE VILLA.

I.

THAT was I, you heard last night
When there rose no moon at all,
Nor, to pierce the strained and tight
Tent of heaven, a planet small:
Life was dead and so was light.

II.

Not a twinkle from the fly,
Not a glimmer from the worm.
When the crickets stopped their cry,
When the owls forbore a term,
You heard music; that was I.

III.

Earth turned in her sleep with pain,
Sultrily suspired for proof:
In at heaven and out again,
Lightning!—where it broke the roof,
Bloodlike, some few drops of rain.

IV.

What they could my words expressed,
O my love, my all, my one!
Singing helped the verses best,
And when singing's best was done,
To my lute I left the rest.

V.

So wore night; the East was gray,
White the broad-faced hemlock-flowers;
There would be another day;
Ere its first of heavy hours
Found me, I had passed away.

VI.

What became of all the hopes,
Words and song and lute as well?
Say, this struck you—"When life gropes
"Feebly for the path where fell
"Light last on the evening slopes,

VII.

"One friend in that path shall be,
"To secure my step from wrong;
"One to count night day for me,
"Patient through the watches long,
"Serving most with none to see."

VIII.

Never say—as something bodes—
"So, the worst has yet a worse!
"When life halts 'neath double loads,
"Better the task-master's curse
"Than such music on the roads!

IX.

“When no moon succeeds the sun,
“Nor can pierce the midnight’s tent
“Any star, the smallest one,
“While some drops, where lightning rent,
“Show the final storm begun—

X.

“When the fire-fly hides its spot,
“When the garden-voices fail
“In the darkness thick and hot,—
“Shall another voice avail,
“That shape be where these are not?

XI.

“Has some plague a longer lease,
“Proffering its help uncouth?
“Can’t one even die in peace?
“As one shuts one’s eyes on youth,
“Is that face the last one sees?”

XII.

Oh how dark your villa was,
Windows fast and obdurate!
How the garden grudged me grass
Where I stood—the iron gate
Ground its teeth to let me pass!

ONE WAY OF LOVE.

I.

ALL June I bound the rose in sheaves.
Now, rose by rose, I strip the leaves
And strew them where Pauline may pass.
She will not turn aside? Alas!
Let them lie. Suppose they die?
The chance was they might take her eye.

II.

How many a month I strove to suit
These stubborn fingers to the lute!
To-day I venture all I know.
She will not hear my music? So!
Break the string; fold music's wing:
Suppose Pauline had bade me sing!

III.

My whole life long I learned to love.
This hour my utmost art I prove
And speak my passion—heaven or hell?
She will not give me heaven? 'T is well!
Lose who may—I still can say,
Those who win heaven, blest are they!

ANOTHER WAY OF LOVE.

I.

JUNE was not over
 Though past the full,
And the best of her roses
 Had yet to blow,
 When a man I know
(But shall not discover,
 Since ears are dull,
And time discloses)
Turned him and said with a man's true air,
Half sighing a smile in a yawn, as 't were,—
“If I tire of your June, will she greatly care?”

II.

Well, dear, in-doors with you!
 True! serene deadness
Tries a man's temper.
 What's in the blossom
 June wears on her bosom?
Can it clear scores with you?
 Sweetness and redness,
 Eadem semper!
Go, let me care for it greatly or slightly!
If June mend her bower now, your hand left unsightly
By plucking the roses,—my June will do rightly.

III.

And after, for pastime,
 If June be refulgent
With flowers in completeness,

All petals, no prickles,
Delicious as trickles
Of wine poured at mass-time,—
And choose One indulgent
To redness and sweetness:
Or if, with experience of man and of spider,
June use my June-lightning, the strong insect-ridder,
And stop the fresh film-work,—why, June will consider.

A PRETTY WOMAN.

I.
THAT fawn-skin-dappled hair of hers,
And the blue eye
Dear and dewy,
And that infantine fresh air of hers!

II.
To think men cannot take you, Sweet,
And enfold you,
Ay, and hold you,
And so keep you what they make you, Sweet!

III.
You like us for a glance, you know—
For a word's sake
Or a sword's sake,
All 's the same, whate'er the chance, you know.

IV.
And in turn we make you ours, we say—
You and youth too,
Eyes and mouth too,
All the face composed of flowers, we say.

V.

All 's our own, to make the most of, Sweet—
Sing and say for,
Watch and pray for,
Keep a secret or go boast of, Sweet!

VI.

But for loving, why, you would not, Sweet,
Though we prayed you,
Paid you, brayed you
In a mortar—for you could not, Sweet!

VII.

So, we leave the sweet face fondly there:
Be its beauty
Its sole duty!
Let all hope of grace beyond, lie there!

VIII.

And while the face lies quiet there,
Who shall wonder
That I ponder
A conclusion? I will try it there.

IX.

As,—why must one, for the love foregone,
Scout mere liking?
Thunder-striking
Earth,—the heaven, we looked above for, gone!

X.

Why, with beauty, needs there money be,
Love with liking?
Crush the fly-king
In his gauze, because no honey-bee?

XI.

May not liking be so simple-sweet,
If love grew there
'T would undo there
All that breaks the cheek to dimples sweet?

XII.

Is the creature too imperfect, say?
Would you mend it
And so end it?
Since not all addition perfects aye!

XIII.

Or is it of its kind, perhaps,
Just perfection—
Whence, rejection
Of a grace not to its mind, perhaps?

XIV.

Shall we burn up, tread that face at once
Into tinder,
And so hinder
Sparks from kindling all the place at once?

XV.

Or else kiss away one's soul on her?
Your love-fancies!
—A sick man sees
Truer, when his hot eyes roll on her!

XVI.

Thus the craftsman thinks to grace the rose,—
Plucks a mould-flower
For his gold flower,
Uses fine things that efface the rose:

XVII.

Rosy rubies make its cup more rose,
Precious metals
Ape the petals,—
Last, some old king locks it up, morose!

XVIII.

Then how grace a rose? I know a way!
Leave it, rather.
Must you gather?
Smell, kiss, wear it—at last, throw away!

RESPECTABILITY.

I.

DEAR, had the world in its caprice
Deigned to proclaim “I know you both,
“Have recognized your plighted troth,
“Am sponsor for you: live in peace!”—
How many precious months and years
Of youth had passed, that speed so fast,
Before we found it out at last,
The world, and what it fears?

II.

How much of priceless life were spent
With men that every virtue decks,
And women models of their sex,
Society's true ornament,—
Ere we dared wander, nights like this,
Thro' wind and rain, and watch the Seine,
And feel the Boulevard break again
To warmth and light and bliss?

III.

I know! the world proscribes not love;
 Allows my finger to caress
 Your lips' contour and downiness,
 Provided it supply a glove.
 The world's good word!—the Institute!
 Guizot receives Montalembert!
 Eh? Down the court three lampions flare:
 Put forward your best foot!

LOVE IN A LIFE.

I.

Room after room,
 I hunt the house through
 We inhabit together.
 Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou shalt find her—
 Next time, herself!—not the trouble behind her
 Left in the curtain, the couch's perfume!
 As she brushed it, the cornice-wreath blossomed anew:
 Yon looking-glass gleamed at the wave of her feather.

II.

Yet the day wears,
 And door succeeds door;
 I try the fresh fortune—
 Range the wide house from the wing to the centre.
 Still the same chance! she goes out as I enter.
 Spend my whole day in the quest,—who cares?
 But 't is twilight, you see,—with such suites to explore,
 Such closets to search, such alcoves to importune!

LIFE IN A LOVE.

ESCAPE me?

Never—

Beloved!

While I am I, and you are you,

So long as the world contains us both,

Me the loving and you the loth,

While the one eludes, must the other pursue.

My life is a fault at last, I fear:

It seems too much like a fate, indeed!

Though I do my best I shall scarce succeed.

But what if I fail of my purpose here?

It is but to keep the nerves at strain,

To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,

And baffled, get up and begin again,—

So the chase takes up one's life, that's all.

While, look but once from your farthest bound

At me so deep in the dust and dark,

No sooner the old hope goes to ground

Than a new one, straight to the self-same mark,

I shape me—

Ever

Removed!

IN THREE DAYS.

I.

So, I shall see her in three days

And just one night, but nights are short,

Then two long hours, and that is morn.

See how I come, unchanged, unworn!

Feel, where my life broke off from thine,
How fresh the splinters keep and fine,—
Only a touch and we combine!

II.

Too long, this time of year, the days!
But nights, at least the nights are short.
As night shows where her one moon is,
A hand's-breadth of pure light and bliss,
So life's night gives my lady birth
And my eyes hold her! What is worth
The rest of heaven, the rest of earth?

III.

O loaded curls, release your store
Of warmth and scent, as once before
The tingling hair did, lights and darks
Outbreaking into fairy sparks,
When under curl and curl I pried
After the warmth and scent inside,
Thro' lights and darks how manifold—
The dark inspired, the light controlled!
As early Art embrowns the gold.

IV.

What great fear, should one say, "Three days
"That change the world might change as well
"Your fortune; and if joy delays,
"Be happy that no worse befell!"
What small fear, if another says,
"Three days and one short night beside
"May throw no shadow on your ways;
"But years must teem with change untried,
"With chance not easily defied,
"With an end somewhere undescried."

No fear!—or if a fear be born
This minute, it dies out in scorn.
Fear? I shall see her in three days
And one night, now the nights are short,
Then just two hours, and that is morn.

IN A YEAR.

I.

NEVER any more,
While I live,
Need I hope to see his face
As before.
Once his love grown chill,
Mine may strive:
Bitterly we re-embrace,
Single still.

II.

Was it something said,
Something done,
Vexed him? was it touch of hand,
Turn of head?
Strange! that very way
Love begun:
I as little understand
Love's decay.

III.

When I sewed or drew,
I recall
How he looked as if I sung,
—Sweetly too.

If I spoke a word,
First of all
Up his cheek the colour sprung,
Then he heard.

IV.

Sitting by my side,
At my feet,
So he breathed but air I breathed,
Satisfied!
I, too, at love's brim
Touched the sweet:
I would die if death bequeathed
Sweet to him.

V.

"Speak, I love thee best!"
He exclaimed:
"Let thy love my own foretell!"
I confessed:
"Clasp my heart on thine
"Now unblamed,
"Since upon thy soul as well
"Hangeth mine!"

VI.

Was it wrong to own,
Being truth?
Why should all the giving prove
His alone?
I had wealth and ease,
Beauty, youth:
Since my lover gave me love,
I gave these.

VII.

That was all I meant,
—To be just,
And the passion I had raised,
To content.
Since he chose to change
Gold for dust,
If I gave him what he praised
Was it strange?

VIII.

Would he loved me yet,
On and on,
While I found some way undreamed
—Paid my debt!
Gave more life and more,
Till, all gone,
He should smile "She never seemed
"Mine before.

IX.

"What, she felt the while,
"Must I think?
"Love 's so different with us men!"
He should smile:
"Dying for my sake—
"White and pink!
"Can't we touch these bubbles then
"But they break?"

X.

Dear, the pang is brief;
Do thy part,
Have thy pleasure! How perplexed
Grows belief!

Well, this cold clay clod
Was man's heart:
Crumble it, and what comes next?
Is it God?

WOMEN AND ROSES.

I.

I DREAM of a red-rose tree.
And which of its roses three
Is the dearest rose to me?

II.

Round and round, like a dance of snow
In a dazzling drift, as its guardians, go
Floating the women faded for ages,
Sculptured in stone, on the poet's pages.
Then follow women fresh and gay,
Living and loving and loved to-day.
Last, in the rear, flee the multitude of maidens,
Beauties yet unborn. And all, to one cadence,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

III.

Dear rose, thy term is reached,
Thy leaf hangs loose and bleached:
Bees pass it unimpeached.

IV.

Stay then, stoop, since I cannot climb,
You, great shapes of the antique time!
How shall I fix you, fire you, freeze you,
Break my heart at your feet to please you?

Oh, to possess and be possessed!
Hearts that beat 'neath each pallid breast!
Once but of love, the poesy, the passion,
Drink but once and die!—In vain, the same fashion,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

V.

Dear rose, thy joy's undimmed;
Thy cup is ruby-rimmed,
Thy cup's heart nectar-brimmed.

VI.

Deep, as drops from a statue's plinth
The bee sucked in by the hyacinth,
So will I bury me while burning,
Quench like him at a plunge my yearning,
Eyes in your eyes, lips on your lips!
Fold me fast where the cincture slips,
Prison all my soul in eternities of pleasure,
Girdle me for once! But no—the old measure,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

VII.

Dear rose without a thorn,
Thy bud 's the babe unborn:
First streak of a new morn.

VIII.

Wings, lend wings for the cold, the clear!
What is far conquers what is near.
Roses will bloom nor want beholders,
Sprung from the dust where our flesh moulders.

What shall arrive with the cycle's change?
A novel grace and a beauty strange.
I will make an Eve, be the artist that began her,
Shaped her to his mind!—Alas! in like manner
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

BEFORE.

I.

Let them fight it out, friend! things have gone too far.
God must judge the couple: leave them as they are
—Whichever one 's the guiltless, to his glory,
And whichever one the guilt 's with, to my story!

II.

Why, you would not bid men, sunk in such a slough,
Strike no arm out further, stick and stink as now,
Leaving right and wrong to settle the embroilment,
Heaven with snaky hell, in torture and entoilment?

III.

Who 's the culprit of them? How must he conceive
God—the queen he caps to, laughing in his sleeve,
“’T is but decent to profess oneself beneath her:
“Still, one must not be too much in earnest, either!”

IV.

Better sin the whole sin, sure that God observes;
Then go live his life out! Life will try his nerves,
When the sky, which noticed all, makes no disclosure,
And the earth keeps up her terrible composure.

V.

Let him pace at pleasure, past the walls of rose,
Pluck their fruits when grape trees graze him as he goes!
For he 'gins to guess the purpose of the garden,
With the sly mute thing, beside there, for a warden.

VI.

What's the leopard-dog-thing, constant at his side,
A leer and lie in every eye of its obsequious hide?
When will come an end to all the mock obeisance,
And the price appear that pays for the misfeasance?

VII.

So much for the culprit. Who 's the martyred man?
Let him bear one stroke more, for be sure he can!
He that strove thus evil's lump with good to leaven,
Let him give his blood at last and get his heaven!

VIII.

All or nothing, stake it! Trusts he God or no?
Thus far and no farther? farther? be it so!
Now, enough of your chicane of prudent pauses,
Sage provisos, sub-intents and saving-clauses!

IX.

Ah, "forgive" you bid him? While God's champion lives,
Wrong shall be resisted: dead, why, he forgives.
But you must not end my friend ere you begin him;
Evil stands not crowned on earth, while breath is in him.

X.

Once more—Will the wronger, at this last of all,
Dare to say, "I did wrong," rising in his fall?
No?—Let go, then! Both the fighters to their places!
While I count three, step you back as many paces!

AFTER.

TAKE the cloak from his face, and at first
Let the corpse do its worst!

How he lies in his rights of a man!
Death has done all death can.
And, absorbed in the new life he leads,
He recks not, he heeds
Nor his wrong nor my vengeance; both strike
On his senses alike,
And are lost in the solemn and strange
Surprise of the change.

Ha, what avails death to erase
His offence, my disgrace?
I would we were boys as of old
In the field, by the fold:
His outrage, God's patience, man's scorn
Were so easily borne!

I stand here now, he lies in his place:
Cover the face!

THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL.

A PICTURE AT FANO.

I.

DEAR and great Angel, wouldst thou only leave
That child, when thou hast done with him, for me!
Let me sit all the day here, that when eve
Shall find performed thy special ministry,
And time come, for departure, thou, suspending
Thy flight, may'st see another child for tending,
Another still, to quiet and retrieve.

II.

Then I shall feel thee step one step, no more,
From where thou standest now, to where I gaze,
—And suddenly my head is covered o'er
With those wings, white above the child who prays
Now on that tomb—and I shall feel thee guarding
Me, out of all the world; for me, discarding
Yon heaven thy home, that waits and opes its door.

III.

I would not look up thither past thy head
Because the door opes, like that child, I know,
For I should have thy gracious face instead,
Thou bird of God! And wilt thou bend me low
Like him, and lay, like his, my hands together,
And lift them up to pray, and gently tether
Me, as thy lamb there, with thy garment's spread?

IV.

If this was ever granted, I would rest
My head beneath thine, while thy healing hands
Close-covered both my eyes beside thy breast,
Pressing the brain, which too much thought expands,
Back to its proper size again, and smoothing
Distortion down till every nerve had soothing,
And all lay quiet, happy and suppressed.

V.

How soon all worldly wrong would be repaired!
I think how I should view the earth and skies
And sea, when once again my brow was bared
After thy healing, with such different eyes.
O world, as God has made it! All is beauty:
And knowing this, is love, and love is duty.
What further may be sought for or declared?

VI.

Guercino drew this angel I saw teach
(Alfred, dear friend!)—that little child to pray,
Holding the little hands up, each to each
Pressed gently,—with his own head turned away
Over the earth where so much lay before him
Of work to do, though heaven was opening o'er him,
And he was left at Fano by the beach.

VII.

We were at Fano, and three times we went
To sit and see him in his chapel there,
And drink his beauty to our soul's content
—My angel with me too: and since I care

For dear Guercino's fame (to which in power
And glory comes this picture for a dower,
Fraught with a pathos so magnificent)

VIII.

And since he did not work thus earnestly
At all times, and has else endured some wrong—
I took one thought his picture struck from me,
And spread it out, translating it to song.
My love is here. Where are you, dear old friend?
How rolls the Wairoa at your world's far end?
This is Ancona, yonder is the sea.

MEMORABILIA.

I.

AH, did you once see Shelley plain,
And did he stop and speak to you,
And did you speak to him again?
How strange it seems and new!

II.

But you were living before that,
And also you are living after;
And the memory I started at—
My starting moves your laughter!

III.

I crossed a moor, with a name of its own
And a certain use in the world no doubt,
Yet a hand's-breadth of it shines alone
'Mid the blank miles round about:

IV.

For there I picked up on the heather
And there I put inside my breast
A moulted feather, an eagle-feather!
Well, I forget the rest.

POPULARITY.

I.

STAND still, true poet that you are!
I know you; let me try and draw you.
Some night you'll fail us: when afar
You rise, remember one man saw you,
Knew you, and named a star!

II.

My star, God's glow-worm! Why extend
That loving hand of his which leads you,
Yet locks you safe from end to end
Of this dark world, unless he needs you,
Just saves your light to spend?

III.

His clenched hand shall uncloset at last,
I know, and let out all the beauty:
My poet holds the future fast,
Accept the coming ages' duty,
Their present for this past.

IV.

That day, the earth's feast-master's brow
Shall clear, to God the chalice raising;
"Others give best at first, but thou
"Forever set'st our table praising,
"Keep'st the good wine till now!"

V.

Meantime, I'll draw you as you stand,
With few or none to watch and wonder:
I'll say—a fisher, on the sand
By Tyre the old, with ocean-plunder,
A netful, brought to land.

VI.

Who has not heard how Tyrian shells
Enclosed the blue, that dye of dyes
Whereof one drop worked miracles,
And coloured like Astarte's eyes
Raw silk the merchant sells?

VII.

And each bystander of them all
Could criticize, and quote tradition
How depths of blue sublimed some pall
—To get which, pricked a king's ambition;
Worth sceptre, crown and ball.

VIII.

Yet there's the dye, in that rough mesh,
The sea has only just o'er-whispered!
Live whelks, each lip's beard dripping fresh,
As if they still the water's lisp heard
Through foam the rock-weeds thresh.

IX.

Enough to furnish Solomon
Such hangings for his cedar-house,
That, when gold-robed he took the throne
In that abyss of blue, the Spouse
Might swear his presence shone

X.

Most like the centre-spike of gold
Which burns deep in the blue-bell's womb
What time, with ardours manifold,
The bee goes singing to her groom,
Drunken and overbold.

XI.

Mere conchs! not fit for warp or woof!
Till cunning come to pound and squeeze
And clarify,—refine to proof
The liquor filtered by degrees,
While the world stands aloof.

XII.

And there's the extract, flasked and fine,
And priced and saleable at last!
And Hobbs, Nobbs, Stokes and Nokes combine
To paint the future from the past,
Put blue into their line.

XIII.

Hobbs hints blue,—straight he turtle eats:
Nobbs prints blue,—claret crowns his cup:
Nokes outdares Stokes in azure feats,—
Both gorge. Who fished the murex up?
What porridge had John Keats?

MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE-GOTHA

I.

HIST, but a word, fair and soft!

Forth and be judged, Master Hugues!

Answer the question I've put you so oft:

What do you mean by your mountainous fugues?

See, we're alone in the loft,—

II.

I, the poor organist here,

Hugues, the composer of note,

Dead though, and done with, this many a year:

Let's have a colloquy, something to quote,

Make the world prick up its ear!

III.

See, the church empties apace:

Fast they extinguish the lights.

Hallo there, sacristan! Five minutes' grace!

Here's a crank pedal wants setting to-rights,

Baulks one of holding the base.

IV.

See, our huge house of the sounds,

Hushing its hundreds at once,

Bids the last loiterer back to his bounds!

—O you may challenge them, not a response

Get the church-saints on their rounds!

V.

(Saints go their rounds, who shall doubt?

—March, with the moon to admire,

Up nave, down chancel, turn transept about,

Supervise all betwixt pavement and spire,

Put rats and mice to the rout—

VI.

Aloys and Jurien and Just—

Order things back to their place,
Have a sharp eye lest the candlesticks rust,
Rub the church-plate, darn the sacrament-lace,
Clear the desk-velvet of dust.)

VII.

Here's your book, younger folks shelve!

Played I not off-hand and runningly,
Just now, your masterpiece, hard number twelve?
Here's what should strike, could one handle it cunningly:
Help the axe, give it a helve!

VIII.

Page after page as I played,

Every bar's rest, where one wipes
Sweat from one's brow, I looked up and surveyed,
O'er my three claviers, yon forest of pipes
Whence you still peeped in the shade.

IX.

Sure you were wishful to speak,

You, with brow ruled like a score,
Yes, and eyes buried in pits on each cheek,
Like two great breves, as they wrote them of yore,
Each side that bar, your straight beak!

X.

Sure you said—"Good, the mere notes!

"Still, couldst thou take my intent,
"Know what procured me our Company's votes—
"A master were lauded and sciolists shent,
"Parted the sheep from the goats!"

XI.

Well then, speak up, never flinch!
Quick, ere my candle's a snuff
—Burnt, do you see? to its uttermost inch—
I believe in you, but that's not enough:
Give my conviction a clinch!

XII.

First you deliver your phrase
—Nothing propound, that I see,
Fit in itself for much blame or much praise—
Answered no less, where no answer needs be:
Off start the Two on their ways.

XIII.

Straight must a Third interpose,
Volunteer needlessly help;
In strikes a Fourth, a Fifth thrusts in his nose,
So the cry's open, the kennel's a-yelp,
Argument 's hot to the close.

XIV.

One dissertates, he is candid;
Two must discept,—has distinguished;
Three helps the couple, if ever yet man did;
Four protests; Five makes a dart at the thing
wished:
Back to One, goes the case bandied.

XV.

One says his say with a difference;
More of expounding, explaining!
All now is wrangle, abuse and vociferance;
Now there's a truce, all's subdued, self-restraining:
Five, though, stands out all the stiffer hence.

XVI.

One is incisive, corrosive;
Two retorts, nettled, curt, crepitant;
Three makes rejoinder, expansive, explosive;
Four overbears them all, strident and strepitant:
Five . . . O Danaides, O Sieve!

XVII.

Now, they ply axes and crowbars;
Now, they prick pins at a tissue
Fine as a skein of the casuist Escobar's
Worked on the bone of a lie. To what issue?
Where is our gain at the Two-bars?

XVIII.

Est fuga, volvitur rota.

On we drift: where looms the dim port?
One, Two, Three, Four, Five, contribute their quota;
Something is gained, if one caught but the import—
Show it us, Hugues of Saxe-Gotha!

XIX.

What with affirming, denying,
Holding, risposting, subjoining,
All's like . . . it's like . . . for an instance I'm trying . . .
There! See our roof, its gilt moulding and groining
Under those spider-webs lying!

XX.

So your fugue broadens and thickens,
Greatens and deepens and lengthens,
Till we exclaim—"But where's music, the dickens?
"Blot ye the gold, while your spider-web strengthens
"Blackened to the stoutest of tickens?"

XXI.

I for man's effort am zealous:

Prove me such censure unfounded!

Seems it surprising a lover grows jealous—

Hopes 't was for something, his organ-pipes sounded,
Tiring three boys at the bellows?

XXII.

Is it your moral of Life?

Such a web, simple and subtle,
Weave we on earth here in impotent strife,
Backward and forward each throwing his shuttle,
Death ending all with a knife?

XXIII.

Over our heads truth and nature—

Still our life's zigzags and dodges,
Ins and outs, weaving a new legislature—

God's gold just shining its last where that lodges,
Palled beneath man's usurpature.

XXIV.

So we o'ershroud stars and roses,

Cherub and trophy and garland;
Nothings grow something which quietly closes

Heaven's earnest eye: not a glimpse of the far land
Gets through our comments and glozes.

XXV.

Ah but traditions, inventions,

(Say we and make up a visage)
So many men with such various intentions,

Down the past ages, must know more than this age!
Leave we the web its dimensions!

XXVI.

Who thinks Hugues wrote for the deaf,
Proved a mere mountain in labour?
Better submit; try again; what's the clef?
'Faith, 't is no trifle for pipe and for tabor—
Four flats, the minor in F.

XXVII.

Friend, your fugue taxes the finger:
Learning it once, who would lose it?
Yet all the while a misgiving will linger,
Truth's golden o'er us although we refuse it—
Nature, thro' cobwebs we string her.

XXVIII.

Hugues! I advise *meâ pœnâ*
(Counterpoint glares like a Gorgon)
Bid One, Two, Three, Four, Five, clear the arena!
Say the word, straight I unstop the full-organ,
Blare out the *mode Palestrina*.

XXIX.

While in the roof, if I'm right there,
... Lo you, the wick in the socket!
Hallo, you sacristan, show us a light there!
Down it dips, gone like a rocket.
What, you want, do you, to come unawares,
Sweeping the church up for first morning-prayers,
And find a poor devil has ended his cares
At the foot of your rotten-runged rat-riddled stairs?
Do I carry the moon in my pocket?

PIPPA PASSES.

A DRAMA.

I DEDICATE MY BEST INTENTIONS, IN THIS POEM,
ADMIRINGLY TO THE AUTHOR OF "ION,"
AFFECTIONATELY TO MR. SERGEANT TALFOURD.

R. B.

London, 1841.

LIBRARY

1891

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE ABOVE IS A TRUE AND CORRECT COPY OF THE

ORIGINAL AS KEPT IN THE OFFICE OF THE

CLERK OF THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

1891

PIPPA PASSES.

NEW YEAR'S DAY AT ASOLO IN THE TREVISAN. *A large mean airy chamber. A girl, PIPPA, from the silk-mills, springing out of bed.*

DAY!

Faster and more fast,
O'er night's brim, day boils at last;
Boils, pure gold, o'er the cloud-cup's brim
Where spurting and suppressed it lay;
For not a froth-flake touched the rim
Of yonder gap in the solid gray
Of the eastern cloud, an hour away;
But forth one wavelet, then another, curled,
Till the whole sunrise, not to be suppressed,
Rose, reddened, and its seething breast
Flickered in bounds, grew gold, then overflowed the
world.

Oh, Day, if I squander a wavelet of thee,
A mite of my twelve-hours' treasure,
The least of thy gazes or glances,
(Be they grants thou art bound to or gifts above
measure)
One of thy choices or one of thy chances,

(Be they tasks God imposed thee or freaks at thy
pleasure)

—My Day, if I squander such labour or leisure,
Then shame fall on Asolo, mischief on me!

Thy long blue solemn hours serenely flowing,
Whence earth, we feel, gets steady help and good—
Thy fitful sunshine-minutes, coming, going,
As if earth turned from work in gamesome mood—
All shall be mine! But thou must treat me not
As the prosperous are treated, those who live
At hand here, and enjoy the higher lot,
In readiness to take what thou wilt give,
And free to let alone what thou refusest;
For, Day, my holiday, if thou ill-usest
Me, who am only Pippa,—old-year's sorrow,
Cast off last night, will come again to-morrow:
Whereas, if thou prove gentle, I shall borrow
Sufficient strength of thee for new-year's sorrow.
All other men and women that this earth
Belongs to, who all days alike possess,
Make general plenty cure particular dearth,
Get more joy one way, if another, less:
Thou art my single day, God lends to leaven
What were all earth else, with a feel of heaven,—
Sole light that helps me through the year, thy sun's!
Try now! Take Asolo's Four Happiest Ones—
And let thy morning rain on that superb
Great haughty Ottima; can rain disturb
Her Sebald's homage? All the while thy rain
Beats fiercest on her shrub-house window-pane,
He will but press the closer, breathe more warm
Against her cheek; how should she mind the storm?

And, morning past, if mid-day shed a gloom
O'er Jules and Phene,—what care bride and groom
Save for their dear selves? 'T is their marriage-day;
And while they leave church and go home their way,
Hand clasping hand, within each breast would be
Sunbeams and pleasant weather spite of thee.
Then, for another trial, obscure thy eve
With mist,—will Luigi and his mother grieve—
The lady and her child, unmatched, forsooth,
She in her age, as Luigi in his youth,
For true content? The cheerful town, warm close
And safe, the sooner that thou art morose,
Receives them. And yet once again, outbreak
In storm at night on Monsignor, they make
Such stir about,—whom they expect from Rome
To visit Asolo, his brother's home,
And say here masses proper to release
A soul from pain,—what storm dares hurt his peace?
Calm would he pray, with his own thoughts to ward
Thy thunder off, nor want the angels' guard.
But Pippa—just one such mischance would spoil
Her day that lightens the next twelvemonth's toil
At wearisome silk-winding, coil on coil!

And here I let time slip for nought!
Aha, you foolhardy sunbeam, caught
With a single splash from my ewer!
You that would mock the best pursuer,
Was my basin over-deep?
One splash of water ruins you asleep,
And up, up, fleet your brilliant bits
Wheeling and counterwheeling,
Reeling, broken beyond healing:
Now grow together on the ceiling!

That will task your wits.
Whoever it was quenched fire first, hoped to see
Morsel after morsel flee
As merrily, as giddily . . .
Meantime, what lights my sunbeam on,
Where settles by degrees the radiant cripple?
Oh, is it surely blown, my martagon?
New-blown and ruddy as St. Agnes' nipple,
Plump as the flesh-bunch on some Turk bird's poll!
Be sure if corals, branching 'neath the ripple
Of ocean, bud there,—fairies watch unroll
Such turban-flowers; I say, such lamps disperse
Thick red flame through that dusk green universe!
I am queen of thee, floweret!
And each fleshy blossom
Preserve I not—(safer
Than leaves that embower it,
Or shells that embosom)
—From weevil and chafer?
Laugh through my pane then; solicit the bee;
Gibe him, be sure; and, in midst of thy glee,
Love thy queen, worship me!

—Worship whom else? For am I not, this day,
Whate'er I please? What shall I please to-day?
My morn, noon, eve and night—how spend my day?
To-morrow I must be Pippa who winds silk,
The whole year round, to earn just bread and milk:
But, this one day, I have leave to go;
And play out my fancy's fullest games;
I may fancy all day—and it shall be so—
That I taste of the pleasures, am called by the names
Of the Happiest Four in our Asolo!

See! Up the hill-side yonder, through the morning,
Some one shall love me, as the world calls love:
I am no less than Ottima, take warning!
The gardens, and the great stone house above,
And other house for shrubs, all glass in front,
Are mine; where Sebald steals, as he is wont,
To court me, while old Luca yet reposes:
And therefore, till the shrub-house door uncloses,
I . . . what now?—give abundant cause for prate
About me—Ottima, I mean—of late,
Too bold, too confident she'll still face down
The spitefullest of talkers in our town.
How we talk in the little town below!

But, love, love, love—there's better love, I know!
This foolish love was only day's first offer;
I choose my next love to defy the scoffer:
For do not our Bride and Bridegroom sally
Out of Possagno church at noon?
Their house looks over Orcana valley:
Why should not I be the bride as soon
As Ottima? For I saw, beside,
Arrive last night that little bride—
Saw, if you call it seeing her, one flash
Of the pale snow-pure cheek and black bright tresses,
Blacker than all except the black eyelash;
I wonder she contrives those lids no dresses!
—So strict was she, the veil
Should cover close her pale
Pure cheeks—a bride to look at and scarce touch,
Scarce touch, remember, Jules! For are not such
Used to be tended, flower-like, every-feature,
As if one's breath would fray the lily of a creature?
A soft and easy life these ladies lead:

Whiteness in us were wonderful indeed.
Oh, save that brow its virgin dimness,
Keep that foot its lady primness,
Let those ankles never swerve
From their exquisite reserve,
Yet have to trip along the streets like me,
All but naked to the knee!
How will she ever grant her Jules a bliss
So startling as her real first infant kiss?
Oh, no—not envy, this!

—Not envy, sure!—for if you gave me
Leave to take or to refuse,
In earnest, do you think I'd choose
That sort of new love to enslave me?
Mine should have lapped me round from the beginning;
As little fear of losing it as winning:
Lovers grow cold, men learn to hate their wives,
And only parents' love can last our lives.
At eve the Son and Mother, gentle pair,
Commune inside our turret: what prevents
My being Luigi? While that mossy lair
Of lizards through the winter-time is stirred
With each to each imparting sweet intents
For this new-year, as brooding bird to bird—
(For I observe of late, the evening walk
Of Luigi and his mother, always ends
Inside our ruined turret, where they talk,
Calmer than lovers, yet more kind than friends)
—Let me be cared about, kept out of harm,
And schemed for, safe in love as with a charm;
Let me be Luigi! If I only knew
What was my mother's face—my father, too!

Nay, if you come to that, best love of all
 Is God's; then why not have God's love befall
 Myself as, in the palace by the Dome,
 Monsignor?—who to-night will bless the home
 Of his dead brother; and God bless in turn
 That heart which beats, those eyes which mildly burn
 With love for all men! I, to-night at least,
 Would be that holy and beloved priest.

Now wait!—even I already seem to share
 In God's love: what does New-year's hymn declare?
 What other meaning do these verses bear?

*All service ranks the same with God:
 If now, as formerly he trod
 Paradise, his presence fills
 Our earth, each only as God wills
 Can work—God's puppets, best and worst,
 Are we; there is no last nor first.*

*Say not "a small event!" Why "small?"
 Costs it more pain than this, ye call
 A "great event," should come to pass,
 Than that? Untwine me from the mass
 Of deeds which make up life, one deed
 Power shall fall short in or exceed!*

And more of it, and more of it!—oh yes—
 I will pass each, and see their happiness,
 And envy none—being just as great, no doubt,
 Useful to men, and dear to God, as they!
 A pretty thing to care about
 So mightily, this single holiday!

But let the sun shine! Wherefore repine?
 —With thee to lead me, O Day of mine,
 Down the grass path grey with dew,
 Under the pine-wood, blind with boughs,
 Where the swallow never flew
 Nor yet cicala dared carouse—
 No, dared carouse!

[*She enters the street.*

I.—MORNING. *Up the Hill-side, inside the Shrub-house.* LUCA'S
 Wife, OTTIMA, and her Paramour, the German SEBALD.

*Seb. [sings.] Let the watching lids wink!
 Day's a-blaze with eyes, think!
 Deep into the night, drink!*

Otti. Night? Such may be your Rhine-land nights
 perhaps;
 But this blood-red beam through the shutter's chink
 —We call such light, the morning: let us see!
 Mind how you grope your way, though! How these tall
 Naked geraniums straggle! Push the lattice
 Behind that frame!—Nay, do I bid you?—Sebald,
 It shakes the dust down on me! Why, of course
 The slide-bolt catches. Well, are you content,
 Or must I find you something else to spoil?
 Kiss and be friends, my Sebald! Is 't full morning?
 Oh, don't speak then!

Seb. Ay, thus it used to be!
 Ever your house was, I remember, shut
 Till mid-day; I observed that, as I strolled
 On mornings through the vale here; country girls
 Were noisy, washing garments in the brook,
 Hinds drove the slow white oxen up the hills:

But no, your house was mute, would ope no eye!
And wisely: you were plotting one thing there,
Nature, another outside. I looked up—
Rough white wood shutters, rusty iron bars,
Silent as death, blind in a flood of light.
Oh, I remember!—and the peasants laughed
And said, “The old man sleeps with the young wife.”
This house was his, this chair, this window—his!

Otti. Ah, the clear morning! I can see St. Mark’s;
That black streak is the belfry. Stop: Vicenza
Should lie . . . there’s Padua, plain enough, that blue!
Look o’er my shoulder, follow my finger!

Seb. Morning?

It seems to me a night with a sun added.
Where’s dew, where’s freshness? That bruised plant,
I bruised

In getting through the lattice yestereve,
Droops as it did. See, here’s my elbow’s mark
I’ the dust o’ the sill.

Otti. Oh, shut the lattice, pray!

Seb. Let me lean out! I cannot scent blood here,
Foul as the morn may be.

There, shut the world out!
How do you feel now, Ottima? There, curse
The world and all outside! Let us throw off
This mask: how do you bear yourself? Let’s out
With all of it!

Otti. Best never speak of it.

Seb. Best speak again and yet again of it,
Till words cease to be more than words. “His blood,”
For instance—let those two words mean, “His blood”
And nothing more. Notice, I’ll say them now,
“His blood.”

Otti. Assuredly if I repented
The deed—

Seb. Repent? Who should repent, or why?
What puts that in your head? Did I once say
That I repented?

Otti. No, I said the deed . . .

Seb. "The deed" and "the event"—just now it was
"Our passion's fruit"—the devil take such cant!
Say, once and always, Luca was a wittol,
I am his cut-throat, you are . . .

Otti. Here's the wine;
I brought it when we left the house above,
And glasses too—wine of both sorts. Black? White
then?

Seb. But am not I his cut-throat? What are you?

Otti. There trudges on his business from the Duomo
Benet the Capuchin, with his brown hood
And bare feet; always in one place at church,
Close under the stone wall by the south entry.
I used to take him for a brown cold piece
Of the wall's self, as out of it he rose
To let me pass—at first, I say, I used:
Now, so has that dumb figure fastened on me,
I rather should account the plastered wall
A piece of him, so chilly does it strike.
This, Sebald?

Seb. No, the white wine—the white wine!
Well, Ottima, I promised no new year
Should rise on us the ancient shameful way;
Nor does it rise: pour on! To your black eyes!
Do you remember last damned New Year's day?

Otti. You brought those foreign prints. We looked
at them

Over the wine and fruit. I had to scheme
To get him from the fire. Nothing but saying
His own set wants the proof-mark, roused him up
To hunt them out.

Seb. 'Faith, he is not alive
To fondle you before my face.

Otti. Do you
Fondle me then! Who means to take your life
For that, my Sebald?

Seb. Hark you, Ottima!
One thing to guard against. We'll not make much
One of the other—that is, not make more
Parade of warmth, childish officious coil,
Than yesterday: as if, sweet, I supposed
Proof upon proof were needed now, now first,
To show I love you—yes, still love you—love you
In spite of Luca and what's come to him
—Sure sign we had him ever in our thoughts,
White sneering old reproachful face and all!
We'll even quarrel, love, at times, as if
We still could lose each other, were not tied
By this: conceive you?

Otti. Love!

Seb. Not tied so sure!
Because though I was wrought upon, have struck
His insolence back into him—am I
So surely yours?—therefore forever yours?

Otti. Love, to be wise, (one counsel pays another)
Should we have—months ago, when first we loved,
For instance that May morning we two stole
Under the green ascent of sycamores—
If we had come upon a thing like that
Suddenly . . .

Seb. "A thing"—there again—"a thing!"

Otti. Then, Venus' body, had we come upon
My husband Luca Gaddi's murdered corpse
Within there, at his couch-foot, covered close—
Would you have pored upon it? Why persist
In poring now upon it? For 't is here
As much as there in the deserted house:
You cannot rid your eyes of it. For me,
Now he is dead I hate him worse: I hate . . .
Dare you stay here? I would go back and hold
His two dead hands, and say, "I hate you worse,
"Luca, than . . ."

Seb. Off, off—take your hands off mine,
'T is the hot evening—off! oh, morning is it?

Otti. There's one thing must be done; you know
what thing.

Come in and help to carry. We may sleep
Anywhere in the whole wide house to-night.

Seb. What would come, think you, if we let him lie
Just as he is? Let him lie there until
The angels take him! He is turned by this
Off from his face beside, as you will see.

Otti. This dusty pane might serve for looking-glass.
Three, four—four grey hairs! Is it so you said
A plait of hair should wave across my neck?
No—this way.

Seb. Ottima, I would give your neck,
Each splendid shoulder, both those breasts of yours,
That this were undone! Killing! Kill the world,
So Luca lives again!—ay, lives to sputter
His fulsome dotage on you—yes, and feign
Surprise that I return at eve to sup,
When all the morning I was loitering here—

Bid me dispatch my business and begone.
I would . . .

Otti. See!

Seb. No, I'll finish! Do you think
I fear to speak the bare truth once for all?
All we have talked of, is, at bottom, fine
To suffer; there's a recompence in guilt;
One must be venturous and fortunate:
What is one young for, else? In age we'll sigh
O'er the wild reckless wicked days flown over;
Still, we have lived: the vice was in its place.
But to have eaten Luca's bread, have worn
His clothes, have felt his money swell my purse—
Do lovers in romances sin that way?
Why, I was starving when I used to call
And teach you music, starving while you plucked me
These flowers to smell!

Otti. My poor lost friend!

Seb. He gave me

Life, nothing less: what if he did reproach
My perfidy, and threaten, and do more—
Had he no right? What was to wonder at?
He sat by us at table quietly:
Why must you lean across till our cheeks touched?
Could he do less than make pretence to strike?
'T is not the crime's sake—I'd commit ten crimes
Greater, to have this crime wiped out, undone!
And you—O how feel you? Feel you for me?

Otti. Well then, I love you better now than ever,
And best (look at me while I speak to you)—
Best for the crime; nor do I grieve, in truth,
This mask, this simulated ignorance,
This affectation of simplicity,

*Review
for Feb*

Falls off our crime; this naked crime of ours
 May not now be looked over: look it down!
 Great? let it be great; but the joys it brought,
 Pay they or no its price? Come: they or it!
 Speak not! The past, would you give up the past
 Such as it is, pleasure and crime together?
 Give up that noon I owned my love for you?
 The garden's silence! even the single bee
 Persisting in his toil, suddenly stopped:
 And where he hid you only could surmise
 By some campanula chalice set a-swing.
 Who stammered—"Yes, I love you?"

Seb. And I drew
 Back; put far back your face with both my hands
 Lest you should grow too full of me—your face
 So seemed athirst for my whole soul and body!

Otti. And when I ventured to receive you here,
 Made you steal hither in the mornings—

Seb. When
 I used to look up 'neath the shrub-house here,
 Till the red fire on its glazed windows spread
 To a yellow haze?

Otti. Ah—my sign was, the sun
 Inflamed the sere side of yon chesnut-tree
 Nipped by the first frost.

Seb. You would always laugh
 At my wet boots: I had to stride thro' grass
 Over my ankles.

Otti. Then our crowning night!

Seb. The July night?

Otti. The day of it too, Sebald!
 When heaven's pillars seemed o'erbowed with heat,
 Its black-blue canopy suffered descend

Close on us both, to weigh down each to each,
And smother up all life except our life.
So lay we till the storm came.

Seb. How it came!

Otti. Buried in woods we lay, you recollect;
Swift ran the searching tempest overhead;
And ever and anon some bright white shaft
Burned thro' the pine-tree roof, here burned and there,
As if God's messenger thro' the close wood screen
Plunged and replunged his weapon at a venture,
Feeling for guilty thee and me: then broke
The thunder like a whole sea overhead—

Seb. Yes!

Otti.—While I stretched myself upon you, hands
To hands, my mouth to your hot mouth, and shook
All my locks loose, and covered you with them—
You, Sebald, the same you!

Seb. Slower, Ottima!

Otti. And as we lay—

Seb. Less vehemently! Love me!
Forgive me! Take not words, mere words, to heart!
Your breath is worse than wine. Breathe slow, speak
slow!

Do not lean on me!

Otti. Sebald, as we lay,
Rising and falling only with our pants,
Who said, "Let death come now! 'T is right to die!
"Right to be punished! Nought completes such bliss
"But woe!" Who said that?

Seb. How did we ever rise?
Was't that we slept? Why did it end?

Otti. I felt you
Taper into a point the ruffled ends

Of my loose locks 'twixt both your humid lips.
My hair is fallen now: knot it again!

Seb. I kiss you now, dear Ottima, now and now!
This way? Will you forgive me—be once more
My great queen?

Otti. Bind it thrice about my brow;
Crown me your queen, your spirit's arbitress,
Magnificent in sin. Say that!

Seb. I crown you
My great white queen, my spirit's arbitress,
Magnificent . . .

[*From without is heard the voice of PIPPA singing—*
The year's at the spring,
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hill-side's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn:
God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world!

[*PIPPA passes.*

Seb. God's in his heaven! Do you hear that? Who
spoke?
You, you spoke!

Otti. Oh—that little ragged girl!
She must have rested on the step: we give them
But this one holiday the whole year round.
Did you ever see our silk-mills—their inside?
There are ten silk-mills now belong to you.
She stoops to pick my double heartsease . . . Sh!
She does not hear: call you out louder!

Seb. Leave me!
Go, get your clothes on—dress those shoulders!

Otti.

Sebald?

Seb. Wipe off that paint! I hate you.*Otti.*

Miserable!

Seb. My God, and she is emptied of it now!

Outright now!—how miraculously gone

All of the grace—had she not strange grace once?

Why, the blank cheek hangs listless as it likes,

No purpose holds the features up together,

Only the cloven brow and puckered chin

Stay in their places: and the very hair,

That seemed to have a sort of life in it,

Drops, a dead web!

Otti.

Speak to me—not of me!

Seb. —That round great full-orbed face, where not
an angle

Broke the delicious indolence—all broken!

Otti. To me—not of me! Ungrateful, perjured cheat!

A coward too: but ingrate's worse than all!

Beggar—my slave—a fawning, cringing lie!

Leave me! Betray me! I can see your drift!

A lie that walks and eats and drinks!

Seb.

My God!

Those morbid olive faultless shoulder-blades—

I should have known there was no blood beneath!

Otti. You hate me then? You hate me then?*Seb.*

To think

She would succeed in her absurd attempt,

And fascinate by sinning, show herself

Superior—guilt from its excess superior

To innocence! That little peasant's voice

Has righted all again. Though I be lost,

I know which is the better, never fear,

Of vice or virtue, purity or lust,

Nature or trick! I see what I have done,
 Entirely now! Oh I am proud to feel
 Such torments—let the world take credit thence—
 I, having done my deed, pay too its price!
 I hate, hate—curse you! God's in his heaven!

Otti.

—Me!

Me! no, no, Sebald, not yourself—kill me!
 Mine is the whole crime. Do but kill me—then
 Yourself—then—presently—first hear me speak!
 I always meant to kill myself—wait, you!
 Lean on my breast—not as a breast; don't love me
 The more because you lean on me, my own
 Heart's Sebald! There, there, both deaths presently!

Seb. My brain is drowned now—quite drowned: all
 I feel

Is . . . is, at swift-recurring intervals,
 A hurry-down within me, as of waters
 Loosened to smother up some ghastly pit:
 There they go—whirls from a black fiery sea!

Otti. Not me—to him, O God, be merciful!

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing from the Hill-side to Orcana.
 Foreign Students of Painting and Sculpture, from Venice,
 assembled opposite the house of JULES, a young French Statuary,
 at Possagno.*

1st Student. Attention! My own post is beneath this window, but the pomegranate clump yonder will hide three or four of you with a little squeezing, and Schramm and his pipe must lie flat in the balcony. Four, five—who's a defaulter? We want everybody, for Jules must not be suffered to hurt his bride when the jest's found out.

2nd. Stud. All here! Only our poet's away—never having much meant to be present, moonstrike him! The airs of that fellow, that Giovacchino! He was in violent love with himself, and had a fair prospect of thriving in his suit, so unmolested was it,—when suddenly a woman falls in love with him, too; and out of pure jealousy he takes himself off to Trieste, immortal poem and all: whereto is this prophetic epitaph appended already, as Bluphocks assures me,—“*Here a mammoth-poem lies, Fouled to death by butterflies.*” His own fault, the simpleton! Instead of cramp couplets, each like a knife in your entrails, he should write, says Bluphocks, both classically and intelligibly.—*Æsculapius, an Epic. Catalogue of the drugs: Hebe's plaister—One strip Cools your lip. Phœbus' emulsion—One bottle Clears your throttle. Mercury's bolus—One box Cures . . .*

3rd. Stud. Subside, my fine fellow! If the marriage was over by ten o'clock, Jules will certainly be here in a minute with his bride.

2nd Stud. Good!—only, so should the poet's muse have been universally acceptable, says Bluphocks, *et canibus nostris . . .* and Delia not better known to our literary dogs than the boy Giovacchino!

1st Stud. To the point, now. Where's Gottlieb, the new-comer? Oh,—listen, Gottlieb, to what has called down this piece of friendly vengeance on Jules, of which we now assemble to witness the winding-up. We are all agreed, all in a tale, observe, when Jules shall burst out on us in a fury by and by: I am spokesman—the verses that are to undeceive Jules bear my name of Lutwyche—but each professes himself alike insulted by this strutting stone-squarer, who

came alone from Paris to Munich, and thence with a crowd of us to Venice and Possagno here, but proceeds in a day or two alone again—oh, alone indubitably!—to Rome and Florence. He, forsooth, take up his portion with these dissolute, brutalized, heartless bunglers!—so he was heard to call us all: now, is Schramm brutalized, I should like to know? Am I heartless?

Gott. Why, somewhat heartless; for, suppose Jules a coxcomb as much as you choose, still, for this mere coxcombry, you will have brushed off—what do folks style it?—the bloom of his life. Is it too late to alter? These love-letters now, you call his—I can't laugh at them.

4th Stud. Because you never read the sham letters of our inditing which drew forth these.

Gott. His discovery of the truth will be frightful.

4th Stud. That's the joke. But you should have joined us at the beginning: there's no doubt he loves the girl—loves a model he might hire by the hour!

Gott. See here! "He has been accustomed," he writes, "to have Canova's women about him, in stone, "and the world's women beside him, in flesh; these "being as much below, as those, above his soul's aspiration: but now he is to have the reality." There you laugh again! I say, you wipe off the very dew of his youth.

1st Stud. Schramm! (Take the pipe out of his mouth, somebody!) Will Jules lose the bloom of his youth?

Schramm. Nothing worth keeping is ever lost in this world: look at a blossom—it drops presently, having done its service and lasted its time; but fruits

succeed, and where would be the blossom's place could it continue? As well affirm that your eye is no longer in your body, because its earliest favourite, whatever it may have first loved to look on, is dead and done with—as that any affection is lost to the soul when its first object, whatever happened first to satisfy it, is superseded in due course. Keep but ever looking, whether with the body's eye or the mind's, and you will soon find something to look on! Has a man done wondering at women?—there follow men, dead and alive, to wonder at. Has he done wondering at men?—there's God to wonder at: and the faculty of wonder may be, at the same time, old and tired enough with respect to its first object, and yet young and fresh sufficiently, so far as concerns its novel one. Thus . . .

1st Stud. Put Schramm's pipe into his mouth again! There, you see! Well, this Jules . . . a wretched fribble—oh, I watched his disportings at Possagno, the other day! Canova's gallery—you know: there he marches first resolvedly past great works by the dozen without vouchsafing an eye: all at once he stops full at the *Psiche-fanciulla*—cannot pass that old acquaintance without a nod of encouragement—"In your new place, beauty? Then behave yourself as well here as at Munich—I see you!" Next he posts himself deliberately before the unfinished *Pietà* for half an hour without moving, till up he starts of a sudden, and thrusts his very nose into—I say, into—the group; by which gesture you are informed that precisely the sole point he had not fully mastered in Canova's practice was a certain method of using the drill in the articulation of the knee-joint—and that, likewise, has

he mastered at length! Good bye therefore, to poor Canova—whose gallery no longer needs detain his successor Jules, the predestinated novel thinker in marble!

5th Stud. Tell him about the women: go on to the women!

1st Stud. Why, on that matter he could never be supercilious enough. How should we be other (he said) than the poor devils you see, with those debasing habits we cherish? He was not to wallow in that mire, at least: he would wait, and love only at the proper time, and meanwhile put up with the *Psiche-fanciulla*. Now, I happened to hear of a young Greek—real Greek girl at Malamocco; a true Islander, do you see, with Alciphron's "hair like sea-moss"—Schramm knows!—white and quiet as an apparition, and fourteen years old at farthest,—a daughter of Natalia, so she swears—that hag Natalia, who helps us to models at three *lire* an hour. We selected this girl for the heroine of our jest. So first, Jules received a scented letter—somebody had seen his Tydeus at the academy, and my picture was nothing to it: a profound admirer bade him persevere—would make herself known to him ere long. (Paolina, my little friend of the *Fenice*, transcribes divinely.) And in due time, the mysterious correspondent gave certain hints of her peculiar charms—the pale cheeks, the black hair—whatever, in short, had struck us in our Malamocco model: we retained her name, too—Phene, which is, by interpretation, sea-eagle. Now, think of Jules finding himself distinguished from the herd of us by such a creature! In his very first answer he proposed marrying his monitress: and fancy us over these letters, two, three times a day, to

receive and dispatch! I concocted the main of it: relations were in the way—secrecy must be observed—in fine, would he wed her on trust, and only speak to her when they were indissolubly united? St—st—Here they come!

6th Stud. Both of them! Heaven's love, speak softly, speak within yourselves!

5th Stud. Look at the bridegroom! Half his hair in storm and half in calm,—patted down over the left temple,—like a frothy cup one blows on to cool it: and the same old blouse that he murders the marble in.

2nd Stud. Not a rich vest like yours, Hannibal Scratchy!—rich, that your face may the better set it off.

6st Stud. And the bride! Yes, sure enough, our Phene! Should you have known her in her clothes? How magnificently pale!

Gott. She does not also take it for earnest, I hope?

1st Stud. Oh, Natalia's concern, that is! We settle with Natalia.

6th Stud. She does not speak—has evidently let out no word. The only thing is, will she equally remember the rest of her lesson, and repeat correctly all those verses which are to break the secret to Jules?

Gott. How he gazes on her! Pity—pity!

1st Stud. They go in: now, silence! You three,—not nearer the window, mind, than that pomegranate: just where the little girl, who a few minutes ago passed us singing, is seated!

II.—NOON. *Over Orcana. The house of JULES, who crosses its threshold with PHENE: she is silent, on which JULES begins—*

Do not die, Phene! I am yours now, you
Are mine now; let fate reach me how she likes,
If you'll not die: so, never die! Sit here—
My work-room's single seat. I over-lean
This length of hair and lustrous front; they turn
Like an entire flower upward: eyes, lips, last
Your chin—no, last your throat turns: 't is their scent
Pulls down my face upon you. Nay, look ever
This one way till I change, grow you—I could
Change into you, beloved!

You by me,
And I by you; this is your hand in mine,
And side by side we sit: all's true. Thank God!
I have spoken: speak you!

O my life to come!

My Tydeus must be carved that's there in clay;
Yet how be carved, with you about the room?
Where must I place you? When I think that once
This room-full of rough block-work seemed my heaven
Without you! Shall I ever work again,
Get fairly into my old ways again,
Bid each conception stand while, trait by trait,
My hand transfers its lineaments to stone?
Will my mere fancies live near you, their truth—
The live truth, passing and repassing me,
Sitting beside me?

Now speak!

Only first,
See, all your letters! Was 't not well contrived?
Their hiding-place is Psyche's robe; she keeps
Your letters next her skin: which drops out foremost?

Ah,—this that swam down like a first moonbeam
Into my world!

Again those eyes complete
Their melancholy survey, sweet and slow,
Of all my room holds; to return and rest
On me, with pity, yet some wonder too:
As if God bade some spirit plague a world,
And this were the one moment of surprise
And sorrow while she took her station, pausing
O'er what she sees, finds good, and must destroy!
What gaze you at? Those? Books, I told you of;
Let your first word to me rejoice them, too:
This minion, a Coluthus, writ in red
Bistre and azure by Bessarion's scribe—
Read this line . . . no, shame—Homer's be the Greek
First breathed me from the lips of my Greek girl!
This Odyssey in coarse black vivid type
With faded yellow blossoms 'twixt page and page,
To mark great places with due gratitude;
"He said, and on Antinous directed
"A bitter shaft" . . . a flower blots out the rest!
Again upon your search? My statues, then!
—Ah, do not mind that—better that will look
When cast in bronze—an Almaign Kaiser, that,
Swart-green and gold, with truncheon based on hip.
This, rather, turn to! What, unrecognised?
I thought you would have seen that here you sit
As I imagined you,—Hippolyta,
Naked upon her bright Numidian horse.
Recall you this then? "Carve in bold relief"—
So you commanded—"carve, against I come,
"A Greek, in Athens, as our fashion was,
"Feasting, bay-filleted and thunder-free,

“Who rises ’neath the lifted myrtle-branch.
“‘Praise those who slew Hipparchus!’ cry the guests,
“‘While o’er thy head the singer’s myrtle waves
“‘As erst above our champion: stand up, all!’”
See, I have laboured to express your thought.
Quite round, a cluster of mere hands and arms,
(Thrust in all senses, all ways, from all sides,
Only consenting at the branch’s end
They strain toward) serves for frame to a sole face,
The Praiser’s, in the centre: who with eyes
Sightless, so bend they back to light inside
His brain where visionary forms throng up,
Sings, minding not that palpitating arch
Of hands and arms, nor the quick drip of wine
From the drenched leaves o’erhead, nor crowns cast off,
Violet and parsley crowns to trample on—
Sings, pausing as the patron-ghosts approve,
Devoutly their unconquerable hymn.
But you must say a “well” to that—say “well!”
Because you gaze—am I fantastic, sweet?
Gaze like my very life’s-stuff, marble—marbly
Even to the silence! Why, before I found
The real flesh Phene, I inured myself
To see, throughout all nature, varied stuff
For better nature’s birth by means of art:
With me, each substance tended to one form
Of beauty—to the human archetype.
On every side occurred suggestive germs
Of that—the tree, the flower—or take the fruit,—
Some rosy shape, continuing the peach,
Curved beewise o’er its bough; as rosy limbs,
Depending, nestled in the leaves; and just
From a cleft rose-peach the whole Dryad sprang.

But of the stuffs one can be master of,
 How I divined their capabilities!
 From the soft-rinded smoothening facile chalk
 That yields your outline to the air's embrace,
 Half-softened by a halo's pearly gloom;
 Down to the crisp imperious steel, so sure
 To cut its one confided thought clean out
 Of all the world. But marble!—'neath my tools
 More pliable than jelly—as it were
 Some clear primordial creature dug from depths
 In the earth's heart, where itself breeds itself,
 And whence all baser substance may be worked;
 Refine it off to air, you may,—condense it
 Down to the diamond;—is not metal there,
 When o'er the sudden speck my chisel trips?
 —Not flesh, as flake off flake I scale, approach,
 Lay bare those bluish veins of blood asleep?
 Lurks flame in no strange windings where, surprised
 By the swift implement sent home at once,
 Flushes and glowings radiate and hover
 About its track?

Phene? what—why is this?
 That whitening cheek, those still-dilating eyes!
 Ah, you will die—I knew that you would die!

PHENE begins, on his having long remained silent.

Now the end's coming; to be sure, it must
 Have ended sometime! Tush, why need I speak
 Their foolish speech? I cannot bring to mind
 One half of it, beside; and do not care
 For old Natalia now, nor any of them.
 Oh, you—what are you?—if I do not try
 To say the words Natalia made me learn,
 To please your friends,—it is to keep myself

Where your voice lifted me, by letting that
 Proceed: but can it? Even you, perhaps,
 Cannot take up, now you have once let fall,
 The music's life, and me along with that—
 No, or you would! We'll stay, then, as we are:
 Above the world.

You creature with the eyes!

If I could look for ever up to them,
 As now you let me,—I believe, all sin,
 All memory of wrong done, suffering borne,
 Would drop down, low and lower, to the earth
 Whence all that's low comes, and there touch and stay
 —Never to overtake the rest of me,
 All that, unspotted, reaches up to you,
 Drawn by those eyes! What rises is myself,
 Not me the shame and suffering; but they sink,
 Are left, I rise above them. Keep me so,
 Above the world!

But you sink, for your eyes

Are altering—altered! Stay—"I love you, love" . . .
 I could prevent it if I understood:
 More of your words to me: was't in the tone
 Or the words, your power?

Or stay—I will repeat

Their speech, if that contents you! Only change
 No more, and I shall find it presently
 Far back here, in the brain yourself filled up.
 Natalia threatened me that harm should follow
 Unless I spoke their lesson to the end,
 But harm to me, I thought she meant, not you.
 Your friends,—Natalia said they were your friends
 And meant you well,—because, I doubted it,
 Observing (what was very strange to see)

On every face, so different in all else,
 The same smile girls like me are used to bear,
 But never men, men cannot stoop so low;
 Yet your friends, speaking of you, used that smile,
 That hateful smirk of boundless self-conceit
 Which seems to take possession of the world
 And make of God a tame confederate,
 Purveyor to their appetites . . . you know!
 But still Natalia said they were your friends,
 And they assented though they smiled the more,
 And all came round me,—that thin Englishman
 With light lank hair seemed leader of the rest;
 He held a paper—"What we want," said he,
 Ending some explanation to his friends—
 "Is something slow, involved and mystical,
 "To hold Jules long in doubt, yet take his taste
 "And lure him on until, at innermost
 "Where he seeks sweetness' soul, he may find—this!
 "—As in the apple's core, the noisome fly:
 "For insects on the rind are seen at once,
 "And brushed aside as soon, but this is found
 "Only when on the lips or loathing tongue."
 And so he read what I have got by heart:
 I'll speak it,—“Do not die, love! I am yours” . .
 No—is not that, or like that, part of words
 Yourself began by speaking? Strange to lose
 What cost such pains to learn! Is this more right?

*I am a painter who cannot paint;
 In my life, a devil rather than saint,
 In my brain, as poor a creature too:
 No end to all I cannot do!
 Yet do one thing at least I can—
 Love a man or hate a man*

*Supremely: thus my lore began.
 Through the Valley of Love I went,
 In the loveliest spot to abide,
 And just on the verge where I pitched my tent,
 I found Hate dwelling beside.
 (Let the Bridegroom ask what the painter meant,
 Of his Bride, of the peerless Bride!)
 And further, I traversed Hate's grove,
 In the hatefullest nook to dwell;
 But lo, where I flung myself prone, couched Love
 Where the shadow threefold fell.
 (The meaning—those black bride's-eyes above,
 Not a painter's lip should tell!)*

“And here,” said he, “Jules probably will ask,
 “‘You have black eyes, Love,—you are, sure enough,
 “‘My peerless bride,—then do you tell indeed
 “‘What needs some explanation! What means this?’”
 —And I am to go on, without a word—

*So, I grew wise in Love and Hate,
 From simple that I was of late.
 Once, when I loved, I would enlase
 Breast, eyelids, hands, feet, form and face
 Of her I loved, in one embrace—
 As if by mere love I could love immensely!
 Once, when I hated, I would plunge
 My sword, and wipe with the first lunge
 My foe's whole life out like a sponge—
 As if by mere hate I could hate intensely!
 But now I am wiser, know better the fashion
 How passion seeks aid from its opposite passion:
 And if I see cause to love more, hate more
 Than ever man loved, ever hated before—*

*And seek in the Valley of Love,
 The nest, or the nook in Hate's Grove,
 Where my soul may surely reach
 The essence, nought less, of each,
 The Hate of all Hates, the Love
 Of all Loves, in the Valley or Grove,—
 I find them the very warders
 Each of the other's borders.
 When I love most, Love is disguised
 In Hate; and when Hate is surprised
 In Love, then I hate most: ask
 How Love smiles through Hate's iron casque,
 Hate grins through Love's rose-braided mask,—
 And how, having hated thee,
 I sought long and painfully
 To reach thy heart, nor prick
 The skin but pierce to the quick—
 Ask this, my Jules, and be answered straight
 By thy bride—how the painter Lutwyche can hate!*

JULES *interposes.*

Lutwyche! Who else? But all of them, no doubt,
 Hated me: they at Venice—presently
 Their turn, however! You I shall not meet:
 If I dreamed, saying this would wake me.

Keep

What's here, the gold—we cannot meet again,
 Consider! and the money was but meant
 For two years' travel, which is over now,
 All chance or hope or care or need of it.
 This—and what comes from selling these, my casts
 And books and medals, except . . . let them go
 Together, so the produce keeps you safe

Out of Natalia's clutches!—If by chance
 (For all's chance here) I should survive the gang
 At Venice, root out all fifteen of them,
 We might meet somewhere, since the world is wide.

[From without is heard the voice of PIPPA, singing—

Give her but a least excuse to love me!

When—where—

How—can this arm establish her above me,

If fortune fixed her as my lady there,

There already, to eternally reprove me?

("Hist!"—said Kate the Queen;

But "Oh"—cried the maiden, binding her tresses,

"'T is only a page that carols unseen,

"Crumbling your hounds their messes!")

Is she wronged?—To the rescue of her honour,

My heart!

Is she poor?—What costs it to be styled a donor?

Merely an earth to cleave, a sea to part.

But that fortune should have thrust all this upon her!

("Nay, list!"—bade Kate the Queen;

And still cried the maiden, binding her tresses,

"'T is only a page that carols unseen,

"Fitting your hawks their jesses!")

[PIPPA passes.

JULES resumes.

What name was that the little girl sang forth?

Kate? The Cornaro, doubtless, who renounced

The crown of Cyprus to be lady here

At Asolo, where still her memory stays,

And peasants sing how once a certain page

Pined for the grace of her so far above

His power of doing good to, "Kate the Queen—

"She never could be wronged, be poor," he sighed,
"Need him to help her!"

Yes, a bitter thing
To see our lady above all need of us;
Yet so we look ere we will love; not I,
But the world looks so. If whoever loves
Must be, in some sort, god or worshipper,
The blessing or the blest one, queen or page,
Why should we always choose the page's part?
Here is a woman with utter need of me,—
I find myself queen here, it seems!

How strange!
Look at the woman here with the new soul,
Like my own Psyche,—fresh upon her lips
Alit, the visionary butterfly,
Waiting my word to enter and make bright,
Or flutter off and leave all blank as first.
This body had no soul before, but slept
Or stirred, was beauteous or ungainly, free
From taint or foul with stain, as outward things
Fastened their image on its passiveness:
Now, it will wake, feel, live—or die again!
Shall to produce form out of unshaped stuff
Be Art—and further, to evoke a soul
From form be nothing? This new soul is mine!

Now, to kill Lutwyche, what would that do?—save
A wretched dauber, men will hoot to death
Without me, from their hooting. Oh, to hear
God's voice plain as I heard it first, before
They broke in with their laughter! I heard them
Henceforth, not God.

To Ancona—Greece—some isle!

I wanted silence only; there is clay
 Everywhere. One may do whate'er one likes
 In Art: the only thing is, to make sure
 That one does like it—which takes pains to know.

Scatter all this, my Phene—this mad dream!
 Who, what is Lutwyche, what Natalia's friends,
 What the whole world except our love—my own,
 Own Phene? But I told you, did I not,
 Ere night we travel for your land—some isle
 With the sea's silence on it? Stand aside—
 I do but break these paltry models up
 To begin Art afresh. Meet Lutwyche, I—
 And save him from my statue meeting him?
 Some unsuspected isle in the far seas!
 Like a god going through his world, there stands
 One mountain for a moment in the dusk,
 Whole brotherhoods of cedars on its brow:
 And you are ever by me while I gaze
 —Are in my arms as now—as now—as now!
 Some unsuspected isle in the far seas!
 Some unsuspected isle in far-off seas!

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing from Orcana to the Turret.
 Two or three of the Austrian Police loitering with BLUPHOCKS,
 an English vagabond, just in view of the Turret.*

*Bluphocks.** So, that is your Pippa, the little girl
 who passed us singing? Well, your Bishop's Inten-
 dant's money shall be honestly earned:—now, don't
 make me that sour face because I bring the Bishop's
 name into the business; we know he can have nothing

* “He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good,
 and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”

to do with such horrors: we know that he is a saint and all that a bishop should be, who is a great man beside. *Oh were but every worm a maggot, Every fly a grig, Every bough a Christmas faggot, Every tune a jig!* In fact, I have abjured all religions; but the last I inclined to, was the Armenian: for I have travelled, do you see, and at Koenigsberg, Prussia Improper (so styled because there's a sort of bleak hungry sun there), you might remark over a venerable house-porch, a certain Chaldee inscription; and brief as it is, a mere glance at it used absolutely to change the mood of every bearded passenger. In they turned, one and all; the young and lightsome, with no irreverent pause, the aged and decrepit, with a sensible alacrity: 't was the Grand Rabbi's abode, in short. Struck with curiosity, I lost no time in learning Syriac—(these are vowels, you dogs,—follow my stick's end in the mud—*Celarent, Darii, Ferio!*) and one morning presented myself, spelling-book in hand, a, b, c,—I picked it out letter by letter, and what was the purport of this miraculous posy? Some cherished legend of the past, you'll say—“*How Moses hocus-pocussed Egypt's land with fly and locust,*”—or, “*How to Jonah sounded harshish, Get thee up and go to Tarshish,*”—or, “*How the angel meeting Balaam, Straight his ass returned a salaam.*” In no wise! *Shackabrack—Boach—somebody or other—Isaach, Re-cei-ver, Pur-cha-ser and Ex-changer of—Stolen Goods!*” So, talk to me of the religion of a bishop! I have renounced all bishops save Bishop Beveridge—mean to live so—and die—*As some Greek dog-sage, dead and merry, Hellward bound in Charon's wherry, With food for both worlds, under and upper, Lupine-seed and Hecate's supper, And never an obolus . . .*

(Though thanks to you, or this Intendant through you, or this Bishop through his Intendant—I possess a burning pocket-full of *zwanzigers*) . . . *To pay the Stygian Ferry!*

1st Pol. There is the girl, then; go and deserve them the moment you have pointed out to us Signor Luigi and his mother. (*To the rest*) I have been noticing a house yonder, this long while: not a shutter unclosed since morning!

2nd Pol. Old Luca Gaddi's, that owns the silk-mills here: he dozes by the hour, wakes up, sighs deeply, says he should like to be Prince Metternich, and then dozes again, after having bidden young Sebald, the foreigner, set his wife to playing draughts. Never molest such a household, they mean well.

Blup. Only, cannot you tell me something of this little Pippa, I must have to do with? One could make something of that name. Pippa—that is, short for Felippa—rhyming to *Panurge consults Hertrippa—Believest thou, King Agrippa!* Something might be done with that name.

2nd Pol. Put into rhyme that your head and a ripe musk-melon would not be dear at half a *zwanziger!* Leave this fooling, and look out: the afternoon's over or nearly so.

3rd Pol. Where in this passport of Signor Luigi does our Principal instruct you to watch him so narrowly? There? What's there beside a simple signature? (That English fool's busy watching.)

2nd Pol. Flourish all round—"Put all possible obstacles in his way;" oblong dot at the end—"Detain him till further advices reach you;" scratch at bottom—"Send him back on pretence of some informality

in the above:" ink-sprit on right-hand side, (which is the case here)—"Arrest him at once." Why and wherefore, I don't concern myself, but my instructions amount to this: if Signor Luigi leaves home to-night for Vienna—well and good, the passport deposed with us for our *visa* is really for his own use, they have misinformed the Office, and he means well; but let him stay over to-night—there has been the pretence we suspect, the accounts of his corresponding and holding intelligence with the Carbonari are correct, we arrest him at once, to-morrow comes Venice, and presently Spielberg. Bluphocks makes the signal, sure enough! That is he, entering the turret with his mother, no doubt.

III.—EVENING. *Inside the Turret on the Hill above Asolo.*
LUIGI and his Mother entering.

Mother. If there blew wind, you'd hear a long sigh,
 easing

The utmost heaviness of music's heart.

Luigi. Here in the archway?

Mother. Oh no, no—in farther,
 Where the echo is made, on the ridge.

Luigi. Here surely, then.
 How plain the tap of my heel as I leaped up!
 Hark—"Lucius Junius!" The very ghost of a voice
 Whose body is caught and kept by . . . what are those?
 Mere withered wallflowers, waving overhead?
 They seem an elvish group with thin bleached hair
 That lean out of their topmost fortress—look
 And listen, mountain men, to what we say,
 Hand under chin of each grave earthy face.

Up and show faces all of you!—"All of you!"
That's the king dwarf with the scarlet comb; old Franz,
Come down and meet your fate! Hark—"Meet your
fate!"

Mother. Let him not meet it, my Luigi—do not
Go to his City! Putting crime aside,
Half of these ills of Italy are feigned:
Your Pellicos and writers for effect,
Write for effect.

Luigi. Hush! Say A. writes, and B.

Mother. These A.s and B.s write for effect, I say.
Then, evil is in its nature loud, while good
Is silent; you hear each petty injury,
None of his virtues; he is old beside,
Quiet and kind, and densely stupid. Why
Do A. and B. not kill him themselves?

Luigi. They teach
Others to kill him—me—and, if I fail,
Others to succeed; now, if A. tried and failed,
I could not teach that: mine's the lesser task.
Mother, they visit night by night . . .

Mother. —You, Luigi?
Ah, will you let me tell you what you are?

Luigi. Why not? Oh, the one thing you fear to
hint,
You may assure yourself I say and say
Ever to myself! At times—nay, even as now
We sit—I think my mind is touched, suspect
All is not sound: but is not knowing that,
What constitutes one sane or otherwise?
I know I am thus—so, all is right again.
I laugh at myself as through the town I walk,
And see men merry as if no Italy

Were suffering; then I ponder—"I am rich,
 "Young, healthy; why should this fact trouble me,
 "More than it troubles these?" But it does trouble.
 No, trouble's a bad word: for as I walk
 There's springing and melody and giddiness,
 And old quaint turns and passages of my youth,
 Dreams long forgotten, little in themselves,
 Return to me—whatever may amuse me;
 And earth seems in a truce with me, and heaven
 Accords with me, all things suspend their strife,
 The very cicala laughs "There goes he, and there!"
 "Feast him, the time is short; he is on his way
 "For the world's sake: feast him this once, our friend!"
 And in return for all this, I can trip
 Cheerfully up the scaffold-steps. I go
 This evening, mother!

Mother. But mistrust yourself—
 Mistrust the judgment you pronounce on him!

Luigi. Oh, there I feel—am sure that I am right!

Mother. Mistrust your judgment then, of the mere
 means

To this wild enterprise: say, you are right,—
 How should one in your state e'er bring to pass
 What would require a cool head, a cold heart
 And a calm hand? You never will escape.

Luigi. Escape? To even wish that, would spoil all.
 The dying is best part of it. Too much
 Have I enjoyed these fifteen years of mine,
 To leave myself excuse for longer life:
 Was not life pressed down, running o'er with joy,
 That I might finish with it ere my fellows
 Who, sparerlier feasted, make a longer stay?
 I was put at the board-head, helped to all

At first; I rise up happy and content.
God must be glad one loves his world so much.
I can give news of earth to all the dead
Who ask me:—last year's sunsets, and great stars
That had a right to come first and see ebb
The crimson wave that drifts the sun away—
Those crescent moons with notched and burning rims
That strengthened into sharp fire, and there stood,
Impatient of the azure—and that day
In March, a double rainbow stopped the storm—
May's warm slow yellow moonlit summer nights—
Gone are they, but I have them in my soul!

Mother. (He will not go!)

Luigi. You smile at me? 'T is true,—
Voluptuousness, grotesqueness, ghastliness,
Environ my devotedness as quaintly
As round about some antique altar wreath
The rose festoons, goats' horns, and oxen's skulls.

Mother. See now: you reach the city, you must
cross
His threshold—how?

Luigi. Oh, that's if we conspired!
Then would come pains in plenty, as you guess—
But guess not how the qualities most fit
For such an office, qualities I have,
Would little stead me, otherwise employed,
Yet prove of rarest merit only here.
Every one knows for what his excellence
Will serve, but no one ever will consider
For what his worst defect might serve: and yet
Have you not seen me range our coppice yonder
In search of a distorted ash?—I find
The wry spoilt branch a natural perfect bow.

Fancy the thrice-sage, thrice-precautioned man
Arriving at the palace on my errand!
No, no! I have a handsome dress packed up—
White satin here, to set off my black hair;
In I shall march—for you may watch your life out
Behind thick walls, make friends there to betray you;
More than one man spoils everything. March straight—
Only, no clumsy knife to fumble for.
Take the great gate, and walk (not saunter) on
Thro' guards and guards—I have rehearsed it all
Inside the turret here a hundred times.
Don't ask the way of whom you meet, observe!
But where they cluster thickliest is the door
Of doors; they'll let you pass—they'll never blab
Each to the other, he knows not the favourite,
Whence he is bound and what's his business now.
Walk in—straight up to him; you have no knife:
Be prompt, how should he scream? Then, out with you!
Italy, Italy, my Italy!

You're free, you're free! Oh mother, I could dream
They got about me—Andrea from his exile,
Pier from his dungeon, Gualtier from his grave!

Mother. Well, you shall go. Yet seems this patriotism
The easiest virtue for a selfish man
To acquire: he loves himself—and next, the world—
If he must love beyond,—but nought between:
As a short-sighted man sees nought midway
His body and the sun above. But you
Are my adored Luigi, ever obedient
To my least wish, and running o'er with love:
I could not call you cruel or unkind.

Once more, your ground for killing him!—then go!

Luigi. Now do you try me, or make sport of me?

How first the Austrians got these provinces . . .
(If that is all, I'll satisfy you soon)
—Never by conquest but by cunning, for
That treaty whereby . . .

Mother. Well?

Luigi. (Sure, he's arrived,
The tell-tale cuckoo: spring 's his confidant,
And he lets out her April purposes!)
Or . . better go at once to modern time.
He has . . they have . . in fact, I understand
But can't restate the matter; that's my boast:
Others could reason it out to you, and prove
Things they have made me feel.

Mother. Why go to-night?
Morn's for adventure. Jupiter is now
A morning-star. I cannot hear you, Luigi!

Luigi. "I am the bright and morning-star," saith
God—

And, "to such an one I give the morning-star."
The gift of the morning-star! Have I God's gift
Of the morning-star?

Mother. Chiara will love to see
That Jupiter an evening-star next June.

Luigi. True, mother. Well for those who live
through June!
Great noontides, thunder-storms, all glaring pomps
That triumph at the heels of June the god
Leading his revel through our leafy world.
Yes, Chiara will be here.

Mother. In June: remember,
Yourself appointed that month for her coming.

Luigi. Was that low noise the echo?

Mother. The night-wind.

She must be grown—with her blue eyes upturned
 As if life were one long and sweet surprise:
 In June she comes.

Luigi. We were to see together
 The Titian at Treviso. There, again!

[From without is heard the voice of PIPPA, singing—

*A king lived long ago,
 In the morning of the world,
 When earth was nigher heaven than now:
 And the king's locks curled,
 Disparting o'er a forehead full
 As the milk-white space 'twixt horn and horn
 Of some sacrificial bull—
 Only calm as a babe new-born:
 For he was got to a sleepy mood,
 So safe from all decrepitude,
 Age with its bane, so sure gone by,
 (The gods so loved him while he dreamed)
 That, having lived thus long, there seemed
 No need the king should ever die.*

Luigi. No need that sort of king should ever die!

*Among the rocks his city was:
 Before his palace, in the sun,
 He sat to see his people pass,
 And judge them every one
 From its threshold of smooth stone.
 They haled him many a valley-thief
 Caught in the sheep-pens, robber-chief
 Swarthy and shameless, beggar-cheat,
 Spy-prowler, or rough pirate found
 On the sea-sand left aground;
 And sometimes clung about his feet,
 With bleeding lip and burning cheek,*

*A woman, bitterest wrong to speak
Of one with sullen thickset brows:
And sometimes from the prison-house
The angry priests a pale wretch brought,
Who through some chink had pushed and pressed
On knees and elbows, belly and breast,
Worm-like into the temple,—caught
He was by the very god,
Who ever in the darkness strode
Backward and forward, keeping watch
O'er his brazen bowls, such rogues to catch!
These, all and every one,
The king judged, sitting in the sun.*
Luigi. That king should still judge sitting in the sun!
*His councillors, on left and right,
Looked anxious up,—but no surprise
Disturbed the king's old smiling eyes
Where the very blue had turned to white.
'T is said, a Python scared one day
The breathless city, till he came,
With forked tongue and eyes on flame,
Where the old king sat to judge alway;
But when he saw the sweepy hair
Girt with a crown of berries rare
Which the god will hardly give to wear
To the maiden who singeth, dancing bare
In the altar-smoke by the pine-torch lights,
At his wondrous forest rites,—
Seeing this, he did not dare
Approach that threshold in the sun,
Assault the old king smiling there.
Such grace had kings when the world begun!*
[PIPPA passes.]

Luigi. And such grace have they, now that the world ends!

The Python at the city, on the throne,
And brave men, God would crown for slaying him,
Lurk in bye-corners lest they fall his prey.
Are crowns yet to be won in this late time,
Which weakness makes me hesitate to reach?
'T is God's voice calls: how could I stay? Farewell!

Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing from the Turret to the Bishop's Brother's House, close to the Duomo S. Maria. Poor Girls sitting on the steps.

1st Girl. There goes a swallow to Venice—the stout seafarer!

Seeing those birds fly, makes one wish for wings.
Let us all wish; you, wish first!

2nd Girl. I? This sunset
To finish.

3rd Girl. That old—somebody I know,
Greyer and older than my grandfather,
To give me the same treat he gave last week—
Feeding me on his knee with fig-peckers,
Lampreys and red Breganze-wine, and mumbling
The while some folly about how well I fare,
Let sit and eat my supper quietly:
Since had he not himself been late this morning
Detained at—never mind where,—had he not . .
“Eh, baggage, had I not!”—

2nd Girl. How she can lie!

3rd Girl. Look there—by the nails!

2nd Girl. What makes your fingers red?

3rd Girl. Dipping them into wine to write bad
words with
On the bright table: how he laughed!

1st Girl. My turn.
Spring's come and summer's coming. I would wear
A long loose gown, down to the feet and hands,
With plaits here, close about the throat, all day;
And all night lie, the cool long nights, in bed;
And have new milk to drink, apples to eat,
Deuzans and junetings, leather-coats . . ah, I should say,
This is away in the fields—miles!

3rd Girl. Say at once
You'd be at home: she'd always be at home!
Now comes the story of the farm among
The cherry orchards, and how April snowed
White blossoms on her as she ran. Why, fool,
They've rubbed the chalk-mark out, how tall you were,
Twisted your starling's neck, broken his cage,
Made a dung-hill of your garden!

1st Girl. They, destroy
My garden since I left them? well—perhaps!
I would have done so: so I hope they have!
A fig-tree curled out of our cottage wall;
They called it mine, I have forgotten why,
It must have been there long ere I was born:
Cric—cric—I think I hear the wasps o'erhead
Pricking the papers strung to flutter there
And keep off birds in fruit-time—coarse long papers,
And the wasps eat them, prick them through and through.

3rd Girl. How her mouth twitches! Where was I?
—before
She broke in with her wishes and long gowns
And wasps—would I be such a fool!—Oh, here!

1st Girl. That she? No, or she would sing.
For the Intendant said . .

3rd Girl. Oh, you sing first!
Then, if she listens and comes close . . I'll tell you,—
Sing that song the young English noble made,
Who took you for the purest of the pure,
And meant to leave the world for you—what fun!

2nd Girl. [*Sings.*]

*You'll love me yet!—and I can tarry
Your love's protracted growing:
June reared that bunch of flowers you carry,
From seeds of April's sowing.*

*I plant a heartfull now: some seed
At least is sure to strike,
And yield—what you'll not pluck indeed,
Not love, but, may be, like.*

*You'll look at least on love's remains,
A grave's one violet:
Your look?—that pays a thousand pains.
What's death? You'll love me yet!*

3rd Girl. [*To PIPPA who approaches.*] Oh you may come closer—we shall not eat you! Why, you seem the very person that the great rich handsome Englishman has fallen so violently in love with. I'll tell you all about it.

IV.—NIGHT. *Inside the Palace by the Duomo.* MONSIGNOR,
dismissing his Attendants.

Mon. Thanks, friends, many thanks! I chiefly desire life now, that I may recompense every one of you. Most I know something of already. What, a

repast prepared? *Benedicto benedicatur* . . . ugh, ugh! Where was I? Oh, as you were remarking, Ugo, the weather is mild, very unlike winter-weather: but I am a Sicilian, you know, and shiver in your Julys here. To be sure, when 't was full summer at Messina, as we priests used to cross in procession the great square on Assumption Day, you might see our thickest yellow tapers twist suddenly in two, each like a falling star, or sink down on themselves in a gore of wax. But go, my friends, but go! [*To the Intendant*] Not you, Ugo! [*The others leave the apartment.*] I have long wanted to converse with you, Ugo.

Inten. Uguccio—

Mon. . . 'guccio Stefani, man! of Ascoli, Fermo and Fossombruno;—what I do need instructing about, are these accounts of your administration of my poor brother's affairs. Ugh! I shall never get through a third part of your accounts: take some of these dainties before we attempt it, however. Are you bashful to that degree? For me, a crust and water suffice.

Inten. Do you choose this especial night to question me?

Mon. This night, Ugo. You have managed my late brother's affairs since the death of our elder brother: fourteen years and a month, all but three days. On the Third of December, I find him . . .

Inten. If you have so intimate an acquaintance with your brother's affairs, you will be tender of turning so far back: they will hardly bear looking into, so far back.

Mon. Ay, ay, ugh, ugh,—nothing but disappointments here below! I remark a considerable payment

made to yourself on this Third of December. Talk of disappointments! There was a young fellow here, Jules, a foreign sculptor I did my utmost to advance, that the Church might be a gainer by us both: he was going on hopefully enough, and of a sudden he notifies to me some marvellous change that has happened in his notions of Art. Here's his letter,—“He never had a clearly conceived Ideal within his brain till to-day. Yet since his hand could manage a chisel, he has practised expressing other men's Ideals; and, in the very perfection he has attained to, he foresees an ultimate failure: his unconscious hand will pursue its prescribed course of old years, and will reproduce with a fatal expertness the ancient types, let the novel one appear never so palpably to his spirit. There is but one method of escape: confiding the virgin type to as chaste a hand, he will turn painter instead of sculptor, and paint, not carve, its characteristics,”—strike out, I dare say, a school like Correggio: how think you, Ugo?

Inten. Is Correggio a painter?

Mon. Foolish Jules! and yet, after all, why foolish? He may—probably will, fail egregiously; but if there should arise a new painter, will it not be in some such way, by a poet now, or a musician, (spirits who have conceived and perfected an Ideal through some other channel) transferring it to this, and escaping our conventional roads by pure ignorance of them; eh, Ugo? If you have no appetite, talk at least, Ugo!

Inten. Sir, I can submit no longer to this course of yours. First, you select the group of which I formed one,—next you thin it gradually,—always retaining me with your smile,—and so do you proceed till you

have fairly got me alone with you between four stone walls. And now then? Let this farce, this chatter end now: what is it you want with me?

Mon. Ugo!

Inten. From the instant you arrived, I felt your smile on me as you questioned me about this and the other article in those papers—why your brother should have given me this villa, that *podere*,—and your nod at the end meant,—what?

Mon. Possibly that I wished for no loud talk here. If once you set me coughing, Ugo!—

Inten. I have your brother's hand and seal to all I possess: now ask me what for! what service I did him—ask me!

Mon. I would better not: I should rip up old disgraces, let out my poor brother's weaknesses. By the way, Maffeo of Forli, (which, I forgot to observe, is your true name,) was the interdict ever taken off you, for robbing that church at Cesena?

Inten. No, nor needs be: for when I murdered your brother's friend, Pasquale, for him . . .

Mon. Ah, he employed you in that business, did he? Well, I must let you keep, as you say, this villa and that *podere*, for fear the world should find out my relations were of so indifferent a stamp? Maffeo, my family is the oldest in Messina, and century after century have my progenitors gone on polluting themselves with every wickedness under heaven: my own father . . . rest his soul!—I have, I know, a chapel to support that it may rest: my dear two dead brothers were,—what you know tolerably well; I, the youngest, might have rivalled them in vice, if not in wealth: but from my boyhood I came out from among them, and

so am not partaker of their plagues. My glory springs from another source; or if from this, by contrast only,—for I, the bishop, am the brother of your employers, Ugo. I hope to repair some of their wrong, however; so far as my brothers' ill-gotten treasure reverts to me, I can stop the consequences of his crime: and not one *soldo* shall escape me. Maffeo, the sword we quiet men spurn away, you shrewd knaves pick up and commit murders with; what opportunities the virtuous forego, the villanous seize. Because, to pleasure myself apart from other considerations, my food would be millet-cake, my dress sackcloth and my couch straw,—am I therefore to let you, the off-scouring of the earth, seduce the poor and ignorant by appropriating a pomp these will be sure to think lessens the abominations so unaccountably and exclusively associated with it? Must I let villas and *poderi* go to you, a murderer and thief, that you may beget by means of them other murderers and thieves? No—if my cough would but allow me to speak!

Inten. What am I to expect? You are going to punish me?

Mon. —Must punish you, Maffeo. I cannot afford to cast away a chance. I have whole centuries of sin to redeem, and only a month or two of life to do it in. How should I dare to say . . .

Inten. “Forgive us our trespasses?”

Mon. My friend, it is because I avow myself a very worm, sinful beyond measure, that I reject a line of conduct you would applaud perhaps. Shall I proceed, as it were, a-pardoning?—I?—who have no symptom of reason to assume that aught less than my strenuousest efforts will keep myself out of mortal sin,

much less keep others out. No: I do trespass, but will not double that by allowing you to trespass.

Inten. And suppose the villas are not your brother's to give, nor yours to take? Oh, you are hasty enough just now!

Mon. 1, 2—N^o 3!—ay, can you read the substance of a letter, N^o 3, I have received from Rome? It is precisely on the ground there mentioned, of the suspicion I have that a certain child of my late elder brother, who would have succeeded to his estates, was murdered in infancy by you, Maffeo, at the instigation of my late younger brother—that the Pontiff enjoins on me not merely the bringing that Maffeo to condign punishment, but the taking all pains, as guardian of the infant's heritage for the Church, to recover it parcel by parcel, howsoever, whensoever and wheresoever. While you are now gnawing those fingers, the police are engaged in sealing up your papers, Maffeo, and the mere raising my voice brings my people from the next room to dispose of yourself. But I want you to confess quietly, and save me raising my voice. Why, man, do I not know the old story? The heir between the succeeding heir, and this heir's ruffianly instrument, and their complot's effect, and the life of fear and bribes and ominous smiling silence? Did you throttle or stab my brother's infant? Come now!

Inten. So old a story, and tell it no better? When did such an instrument ever produce such an effect? Either the child smiles in his face; or, most likely, he is not fool enough to put himself in the employer's power so thoroughly: the child is always ready to produce—as you say—howsoever, wheresoever and whensoever.

Mon. Liar!

Inten. Strike me? Ah, so might a father chastise! I shall sleep soundly to-night at least, though the gallows await me to-morrow; for, what a life did I lead! Carlo of Cesena reminds me of his connivance, every time I pay his annuity; which happens commonly thrice a year. If I remonstrate, he will confess all to the good bishop—you!

Mon. I see through the trick, caitiff! I would you spoke truth for once. All shall be sifted, however—seven times sifted.

Inten. And how my absurd riches encumbered me! I dared not lay claim to above half my possessions. Let me but once unbosom myself, glorify Heaven, and die!

Sir, you are no brutal dastardly idiot like your brother I frightened to death: let us understand one another. Sir, I will make away with her for you—the girl—here close at hand; not the stupid obvious kind of killing; do not speak—know nothing of her nor of me! I see her every day—saw her this morning: of course there is to be no killing; but at Rome the courtesans perish off every three years, and I can entice her thither—have indeed begun operations already. There's a certain lusty blue-eyed florid-complexioned English knave, I and the Police employ occasionally. You assent, I perceive—no, that's not it—assent I do not say—but you will let me convert my present havings and holdings into cash, and give me time to cross the Alps? 'T is but a little black-eyed pretty singing Felippa, gay silk-winding girl. I have kept her out of harm's way up to this present; for I always intended to make your life a plague to

you with her. 'T is as well settled once and for ever. Some women I have procured will pass Bluphocks, my handsome scoundrel, off for somebody; and once Pippa entangled!—you conceive? Through her singing? Is it a bargain?

[From without is heard the voice of PIPPA, singing—

*Overhead the tree-tops meet,
Flowers and grass spring 'neath one's feet;
There was nought above me, nought below,
My childhood had not learned to know:
For, what are the voices of birds
—Ay, and of beasts,—but words, our words,
Only so much more sweet?
The knowledge of that with my life begun.
But I had so near made out the sun,
And counted your stars, the seven and one,
Like the fingers of my hand:
Nay, I could all but understand
Wherefore through heaven the white moon ranges;
And just when out of her soft fifty changes
No unfamiliar face might overlook me—
Suddenly God took me.*

[PIPPA passes.

Mon. [Springing up.] My people—one and all—all—within there! Gag this villain—tie him hand and foot! He dares . . . I know not half he dares—but remove him—quick! *Miserere mei, Domine!* Quick, I say!

PIPPA'S Chamber again. She enters it.

The bee with his comb,
The mouse at her dray,

The grub in its tomb,
Wile winter away;
But the fire-fly and hedge-shrew and lob-worm, I pray,
How fare they?

Ha, ha, thanks for your counsel, my Zanze!
“Feast upon lampreys, quaff the Breganze!”

The summer of life so easy to spend,
And care for to morrow so soon put away!
But winter hastens at summer’s end,
And fire-fly, hedge-shrew, lob-worm, pray,
How fare they?

No bidding me then to . . . what did Zanze say?
“Pare your nails pearlwise, get your small feet shoes
“More like” . . . (what said she?)—“and less like
canoes!”

How pert that girl was!—would I be those pert
Impudent staring women! It had done me,
However, surely no such mighty hurt
To learn his name who passed that jest upon me:
No foreigner, that I can recollect,
Came, as she says, a month since, to inspect
Our silk-mills—none with blue eyes and thick rings
Of raw-silk-coloured hair, at all events.
Well, if old Luca keep his good intents,
We shall do better, see what next year brings!
I may buy shoes, my Zanze, not appear
More destitute than you perhaps next year!
Bluph . . . something! I had caught the uncouth
name

But for Monsignor’s people’s sudden clatter
Above us—bound to spoil such idle chatter
As ours: it were indeed a serious matter
If silly talk like ours should put to shame

The pious man, the man devoid of blame,
The . . . ah but—ah but, all the same,
No mere mortal has a right
To carry that exalted air;
Best people are not angels quite:
While—not the worst of people's doings scare
The devil; so there's that proud look to spare!

Which is mere counsel to myself, mind! for
I have just been the holy Monsignor:

And I was you too, Luigi's gentle mother,
And you too, Luigi!—how that Luigi started
Out of the turret—doubtlessly departed
On some good errand or another,
For he passed just now in a traveller's trim,
And the sullen company that prowled
About his path, I noticed, scowled
As if they had lost a prey in him.
And I was Jules the sculptor's bride,
And I was Ottima beside,
And now what am I?—tired of fooling.
Day for folly, night for schooling!
New year's day is over and spent,
Ill or well, I must be content.

Even my lily's asleep, I vow:
Wake up—here's a friend I've plucked you!
Call this flower a heart's-ease now!
Something rare, let me instruct you,
Is this, with petals triply swollen,
Three times spotted, thrice the pollen;
While the leaves and parts that witness
Old proportions and their fitness,
Here remain unchanged, unmoved now;
Call this pampered thing improved now!

Suppose there's a king of the flowers
And a girl-show held in his bowers—
"Look ye, buds, this growth of ours,"
Says he, "Zanze from the Brenta,
"I have made her gorge polenta
"Till both cheeks are near as bouncing
"As her . . . name there's no pronouncing!
"See this heightened colour too,
"For she swilled Breganze wine
"Till her nose turned deep carmine;
"T was but white when wild she grew.
"And only by this Zanze's eyes
"Of which we could not change the size,
"The magnitude of all achieved
"Otherwise, may be perceived."

Oh what a drear dark close to my poor day!
How could that red sun drop in that black cloud?
Ah Pippa, morning's rule is moved away,
Dispensed with, never more to be allowed!
Day's turn is over, now arrives the night's.
Oh lark, be day's apostle
To mavis, merle and throstle,
Bid them their betters jostle
From day and its delights!
But at night, brother howlet, over the woods,
Toll the world to thy chantry;
Sing to the bats' sleek sisterhoods
Full complines with gallantry:
Then, owls and bats,
Cowls and twats,
Monks and nuns, in a cloister's moods,
Adjourn to the oak-stump pantry!

[After she has begun to undress herself.]

Now, one thing I should like to really know:

How near I ever might approach all these

I only fancied being, this long day:

—Approach, I mean, so as to touch them, so

As to . . in some way . . move them—if you please,

Do good or evil to them some slight way.

For instance, if I wind

Silk to-morrow, my silk may bind

[Sitting on the bedside.]

And border Ottima's cloak's hem.

Ah me, and my important part with them,

This morning's hymn half promised when I rose!

True in some sense or other, I suppose.

[As she lies down.]

God bless me! I can pray no more to-night.

No doubt, some way or other, hymns say right.

All service ranks the same with God—

With God, whose puppets, best and worst,

Are we: there is no last nor first.

[She sleeps.]

Now, one thing I should like to say to you:
How can I ever again be so happy?
I only tasted being this long day:
--I thought I never so as to know about it
as to . . . in some way . . . more than all
to good or evil to them some light way
for instance, if I wish
like to know, my silk may be

And border Othello's cloak's here
in me and my imperfect part with them
This morning's hymn I'll worship about a soul
True in some sense or other I repeat:

God bless me! I can pray no more tonight.
No doubt some way or other I must say right
all to me make the same with God
Will God, whose power is not and cannot
the one that is no fact and that

A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON.

A TRAGEDY.

1843.

PERSONS.

MILDRED TRESHAM.

GUENDOLEN TRESHAM.

THOROLD, Earl Tresham.

AUSTIN TRESHAM.

HENRY, Earl Mertoun.

GERARD, and other Retainers of Lord Tresham.

TIME 17—

A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *The interior of a lodge in LORD TRESHAM'S park. Many Retainers crowded at the window, supposed to command a view of the entrance to his mansion. GERARD, the Warrener, his back to a table on which are flagons, etc.*

1st Ret. Ay, do! push, friends, and then you'll push down me!

—What for? Does any hear a runner's foot
Or a steed's trample or a coach-wheel's cry?
Is the Earl come or his least pursuivant?
But there's no breeding in a man of you
Save Gerard yonder: here's a half-place yet,
Old Gerard!

Ger. Save your courtesies, my friend.
Here is my place.

2nd Ret. Now, Gerard, out with it!
What makes you sullen, this of all the days
I' the year? To-day that young rich bountiful
Handsome Earl Mertoun, whom alone they match
With our Lord Tresham through the country-side,
Is coming here in utmost bravery
To ask our master's sister's hand?

Ger.

What then?

2nd Ret. What then? Why, you, she speaks to, if
she meets

Your worship, smiles on as you hold apart
The boughs to let her through her forest walks,
You, always favourite for your no-deserts,
You've heard, these three days, how Earl Mertoun
sues

To lay his heart and house and broad lands too
At Lady Mildred's feet: and while we squeeze
Ourselves into a mousehole lest we miss
One congee of the least page in his train,
You sit o' one side—"there's the Earl," say I—
"What then," say you!

3rd Ret.

I'll wager he has let
Both swans he tamed for Lady Mildred, swim
Over the falls and gain the river!

Ger.

Ralph,

Is not to-morrow my inspecting-day
For you and for your hawks?

4th Ret.

Let Gerard be!

He's coarse-grained, like his carved black cross-bow
stock.

Ha, look now, while we squabble with him, look!
Well done, now—is not this beginning, now,
To purpose?

1st Ret. Our retainers look as fine—

That's comfort. Lord, how Richard holds himself
With his white staff! Will not a knave behind
Prick him upright?

4th Ret.

He's only bowing, fool!

The Earl's man bent us lower by this much.

1st Ret. That's comfort. Here's a very cavalcade!

3rd Ret. I don't see wherefore Richard, and his
troop

Of silk and silver varlets there, should find
Their perfumed selves so indispensable
On high days, holidays! Would it so disgrace
Our family, if I, for instance, stood—
In my right hand a cast of Swedish hawks,
A leash of greyhounds in my left?—

Ger. —With Hugh

The logman for supporter, in his right
The bill-hook, in his left the brushwood-shears!

3rd Ret. Out on you, crab! What next, what next?
The Earl!

1st Ret. Oh Walter, groom, our horses, do they match
The Earl's? Alas, that first pair of the six—
They paw the ground—ah Walter! and that brute
Just on his haunches by the wheel!

6th Ret. Ay—Ay!

You, Philip, are a special hand, I hear,
At soups and sauces: what's a horse to you?
D'ye mark that beast they've slid into the midst
So cunningly?—then, Philip, mark this further;
No leg has he to stand on!

1st Ret. No? That's comfort.

2nd Ret. Peace, Cook! The Earl descends.—Well,
Gerard, see

The Earl at least! Come, there's a proper man,
I hope! Why, Ralph, no falcon, Pole or Swede,
Has got a starrier eye.

3rd Ret. His eyes are blue—

But leave my hawks alone!

4th Ret. So young, and yet

So tall and shapely!

5th Ret. Here's Lord Tresham's self!
There now—there's what a nobleman should be!
He's older, graver, loftier, he's more like
A House's head!

2nd Ret. But you'd not have a boy
—And what's the Earl beside?—possess too soon
That stateliness?

1st Ret. Our master takes his hand—
Richard and his white staff are on the move—
Back fall our people—(tsh!—there's Timothy
Sure to get tangled in his ribbon-ties—
And Peter's cursed rosette's a-coming off!)
—At last I see our lord's back and his friend's—
And the whole beautiful bright company
Close round them—in they go! [*Jumping down from
the window-bench, and making for the table
and its jugs.*] Good health, long life,
Great joy to our Lord Tresham and his House!

6th Ret. My father drove his father first to court,
After his marriage-day—ay, did he!

2nd Ret. God bless
Lord Tresham, Lady Mildred, and the Earl!
Here, Gerard, reach your beaker!

Ger. Drink, my boys!
Don't mind me—all's not right about me—drink!

2nd Ret. [*Aside.*] He's vexed, now, that he let the
show escape!

[*To GER.*] Remember that the Earl returns this way.

Ger. That way?

2nd Ret. Just so.

Ger. Then my way's here. [*Goes.*

1nd Ret. Old Gerard
Will die soon—mind, I said it! He was used

To care about the pitifullest thing
 That touched the House's honour, not an eye
 But his could see wherein: and on a cause
 Of scarce a quarter this importance, Gerard
 Fairly had fretted flesh and bone away
 In cares that this was right, nor that was wrong,
 Such a point decorous, and such square by rule—
 He knew such niceties, no herald more:
 And now—you see his humour: die he will!

2nd Ret. God help him! Who's for the great ser-
 vant's-hall

To hear what's going on inside? They'd follow
 Lord Tresham into the saloon.

3rd Ret.

I!—

4th. Ret.

I!—

Leave Frank alone for catching, at the door,
 Some hint of how the parley goes inside!
 Prosperity to the great House once more!
 Here's the last drop!

1st Ret.

Have at you! Boys, hurrah!

SCENE II.—*A Saloon in the Mansion.*

Enter LORD TRESHAM, LORD MERTOUN, AUSTIN, and
 GUENDOLEN.

Tresh. I welcome you, Lord Mertoun, yet once more,
 To this ancestral roof of mine. Your name
 —Noble among the noblest in itself,
 Yet taking in your person, fame avers,
 New price and lustre,—(as that gem you wear,
 Transmitted from a hundred knightly breasts,
 Fresh chased and set and fixed by its last lord,

Seems to re-kindle at the core)—your name
Would win you welcome!—

Mer.

Thanks!

Tresh.

—But add to that,

The worthiness and grace and dignity
Of your proposal for uniting both
Our Houses even closer than respect
Unites them now—add these, and you must grant
One favour more, nor that the least,—to think
The welcome I should give;—'t is given! My lord,
My only brother, Austin—he's the king's.
Our cousin, Lady Guendolen—betrothed
To Austin: all are yours.

Mer.

I thank you—less

For the expressed commendings which your seal,
And only that, authenticates—forbids
My putting from me . . . to my heart I take
Your praise . . . but praise less claims my gratitude,
Than the indulgent insight it implies
Of what must needs be uppermost with one
Who comes, like me, with the bare leave to ask,
In weighed and measured unimpassioned words,
A gift, which, if as calmly 't is denied,
He must withdraw, content upon his cheek,
Despair within his soul. That I dare ask
Firmly, near boldly, near with confidence
That gift, I have to thank you. Yes, Lord Tresham,
I love your sister—as you'd have one love
That lady . . . oh more, more I love her! Wealth,
Rank, all the world thinks me, they're yours, you
know,
To hold or part with, at your choice—but grant
My true self, me without a rood of land,

A piece of gold, a name of yesterday,
Grant me that lady, and you . . . Death or life?

Guen. [*apart to AUS.*] Why, this is loving, Austin!

Aus. He's so young!

Guen. Young? Old enough, I think, to half surmise
He never had obtained an entrance here,
Were all this fear and trembling needed.

Aus. Hush!

He reddens.

Guen. Mark him, Austin; that's true love!
Ours must begin again.

Tresh. We'll sit, my lord.
Ever with best desert goes diffidence.
I may speak plainly nor be misconceived.
That I am wholly satisfied with you
On this occasion, when a falcon's eye
Were dull compared with mine to search out faults,
Is somewhat. Mildred's hand is hers to give
Or to refuse.

Mer. But you, you grant my suit?
I have your word if hers?

Tresh. My best of words
If hers encourage you. I trust it will.
Have you seen Lady Mildred, by the way?

Mer. I . . . I . . . our two demesnes, remember,
touch;
I have been used to wander carelessly
After my stricken game: the heron roused
Deep in my woods, has trailed its broken wing
Thro' thicks and glades a mile in yours,—or else
Some eyass ill-reclaimed has taken flight
And lured me after her from tree to tree,
I marked not whither. I have come upon

The lady's wondrous beauty unaware,
And—and then . . . I have seen her.

Guen. [*aside to AUS.*] Note that mode
Of faltering out that, when a lady passed,
He, having eyes, did see her! You had said—
“On such a day I scanned her, head to foot;
“Observed a red, where red should not have been,
“Outside her elbow; but was pleased enough
“Upon the whole.” Let such irreverent talk
Be lessoned for the future!

Tresh. What's to say
May be said briefly. She has never known
A mother's care; I stand for father too.
Her beauty is not strange to you, it seems—
You cannot know the good and tender heart,
Its girl's trust and its woman's constancy,
How pure yet passionate, how calm yet kind,
How grave yet joyous, how reserved yet free
As light where friends are—how imbued with lore
The world most prizes, yet the simplest, yet
The . . one might know I talked of Mildred—thus
We brothers talk!

Mer. I thank you.

Tresh. In a word,
Control's not for this lady; but her wish
To please me outstrips in its subtlety
My power of being pleased: herself creates
The want she means to satisfy. My heart
Prefers your suit to her as 't were its own.
Can I say more?

Mer. No more—thanks, thanks—no more!

Tresh. This matter then discussed . . .

Mer. —We'll waste no breath

On aught less precious. I'm beneath the roof
Which holds her: while I thought of that, my speech
To you would wander—as it must not do,
Since as you favour me I stand or fall.
I pray you suffer that I take my leave!

Tresh. With less regret 't is suffered, that again
We meet, I hope, so shortly.

Mer. We? again?—
Ah yes, forgive me—when shall . . you will crown
Your goodness by forthwith apprising me
When . . if . . the lady will appoint a day
For me to wait on you—and her.

Tresh. So soon
As I am made acquainted with her thoughts
On your proposal—howsoe'er they lean—
A messenger shall bring you the result.

Mer. You cannot bind me more to you, my lord.
Farewell till we renew . . I trust, renew
A converse ne'er to disunite again.

Tresh. So may it prove!

Mer. You, lady, you, sir, take
My humble salutation!

Guen. & Aus. Thanks!

Tresh. Within there!

[Servants enter. TRESHAM conducts MERTOUN to the door. Mean-
time AUSTIN remarks,

Well,

Here I have an advantage of the Earl,
Confess now! I'd not think that all was safe
Because my lady's brother stood my friend!
Why, he makes sure of her—"do you say, yes—
"She'll not say, no,"—what comes it to beside?
I should have prayed the brother, "speak this speech,

"For Heaven's sake urge this on her—put in this—
 "Forget not, as you'd save me, t' other thing,—
 "Then set down what she says, and how she looks,
 "And if she smiles, and" (in an under-breath)
 "Only let her accept me, and do you
 "And all the world refuse me, if you dare!"

Guen. That way you'd take, friend Austin? What a shame

I was your cousin, tamely from the first
 Your bride, and all this fervour's run to waste!
 Do you know you speak sensibly to-day?
 The Earl's a fool.

Aus. Here's Thorold. Tell him so!

Tresh. (*returning.*) Now, voices, voices! 'St! the lady's first!

How seems he?—seems he not .. come, faith give fraud
 The mercy-stroke whenever they engage!
 Down with fraud, up with faith! How seems the Earl?
 A name! a blazon! if you knew their worth,
 As you will never! come—the Earl?

Guen. He's young.

Tresh. What's she? an infant save in heart and brain.
 Young! Mildred is fourteen, remark! And you ..
 Austin, how old is she?

Guen. There's tact for you!
 I meant that being young was good excuse
 If one should tax him ..

Tresh. Well?

Guen. —With lacking wit.

Tresh. He lacked wit? Where might he lack wit, so please you?

Guen. In standing straighter than the steward's rod
 And making you the tiresomest harangue,

Instead of slipping over to my side
And softly whispering in my ear, "Sweet lady,
"Your cousin there will do me detriment
"He little dreams of: he's absorbed, I see,
"In my old name and fame—be sure he'll leave
"My Mildred, when his best account of me
"Is ended, in full confidence I wear
"My grandsire's periwig down either cheek.
"I'm lost unless your gentleness vouchsafes" . .

Tresh. . . "To give a best of best accounts, yourself,
"Of me and my demerits." You are right!
He should have said what now I say for him.
Yon golden creature, will you help us all?
Here's Austin means to vouch for much, but you
—You are . . what Austin only knows! Come up,
All three of us: she's in the library
No doubt, for the day's wearing fast. Precede!

Guen. Austin, how we must—!

Tresh. Must what? Must speak truth,
Malignant tongue! Detect one fault in him!
I challenge you!

Guen. Witchcraft's a fault in him,
For you're bewitched.

Tresh. What's urgent we obtain
Is, that she soon receive him—say, to-morrow—
Next day at furthest.

Guen. Ne'er instruct me!

Tresh. Come!
—He's out of your good graces, since, forsooth,
He stood not as he'd carry us by storm
With his perfections! You're for the composed
Manly assured becoming confidence!
—Get her to say, "to-morrow," and I'll give you . .

I'll give you black Urganda, to be spoiled
With petting and snail-paces. Will you? Come!

SCENE III. MILDRED'S *Chamber.* *A painted window overlooks the Park.* MILDRED and GUENDOLEN.

Guen. Now, Mildred, spare those pains. I have not
left

Our talkers in the library, and climbed
The wearisome ascent to this your bower
In company with you,—I have not dared . .
Nay, worked such prodigies as sparing you
Lord Mertoun's pedigree before the flood,
Which Thorold seemed in very act to tell
—Or bringing Austin to pluck up that most
Firm-rooted heresy—your suitor's eyes,
He would maintain, were grey instead of blue—
I think I brought him to contrition!—Well,
I have not done such things, (all to deserve
A minute's quiet cousin's talk with you,)
To be dismissed so coolly!

Mil. Guendolen!

What have I done? what could suggest . .

Guen. There, there!

Do I not comprehend you'd be alone
To throw those testimonies in a heap,
Thorold's enlargings, Austin's brevities,
With that poor silly heartless Guendolen's
Ill-timed misplaced attempted smartnesses—
And sift their sense out? now, I come to spare you
Nearly a whole night's labour. Ask and have!
Demand, be answered! Lack I ears and eyes?

Am I perplexed which side, of the rock-table
The Conqueror dined on when he landed first,
Lord Mertoun's ancestor was bidden take—
The bow-hand or the arrow-hand's great meed?
Mildred, the Earl has soft blue eyes!

Mil. My brother—

Did he . . you said that he received him well?

Guen. If I said only "well" I said not much—
Oh, stay—which brother?

Mil. Thorold! who—who else?

Guen. Thorold (a secret) is too proud by half,—
Nay, hear me out—with us he's even gentler
Than we are with our birds. Of this great House
The least retainer that e'er caught his glance
Would die for him, real dying—no mere talk:
And in the world, the court, if men would cite
The perfect spirit of honour, Thorold's name
Rises of its clear nature to their lips.
But he should take men's homage, trust in it,
And care no more about what drew it down.
He has desert, and that, acknowledgment;
Is he content?

Mil. You wrong him, Guendolen.

Guen. He's proud, confess; so proud with brooding
o'er
The light of his interminable line,
An ancestry with men all paladins,
And women all . .

Mil. Dear Guendolen, 't is late!
When yonder purple pane the climbing moon
Pierces, I know 't is midnight.

Guen. Well, that Thorold
Should rise up from such musings, and receive

One come audaciously to graft himself
 Into this peerless stock, yet find no flaw,
 No slightest spot in such an one . . .

Mil. Who finds
 A spot in Mertoun?

Guen. Not your brother; therefore,
 Not the whole world.

Mil. I am weary, Guendolen.—
 Bear with me!

Guen. I am foolish.

Mil. Oh no, kind—
 But I would rest.

Guen. Good night and rest to you!
 I said how gracefully his mantle lay
 Beneath the rings of his light hair?

Mil. Brown hair.

Guen. Brown? why it is brown—how could you know
 that?

Mil. How? did not you—Oh, Austin 'twas, de-
 clared
 His hair was light, not brown—my head!—and
 look,
 The moon-beam purpling the dark chamber! Sweet,
 Good-night!

Guen. Forgive me—sleep the soundlier for me!

[*Going, she turns suddenly.*

Mildred!

Perdition! all's discovered! Thorold finds
 —That the Earl's greatest of all grandmothers
 Was grander daughter still—to that fair dame
 Whose garter slipped down at the famous dance!

[*Goes.*

Mil. Is she—can she be really gone at last?

My heart! I shall not reach the window. Needs
Must I have sinned much, so to suffer!

*[She lifts the small lamp which is suspended before the
Virgin's image in the window, and places it by the
purple pane.]*

There!

[She returns to the seat in front.]

Mildred and Mertoun! Mildred, with consent
Of all the world and Thorold, Mertoun's bride!
Too late! 'T is sweet to think of, sweeter still
To hope for, that this blessed end soothes up
The curse of the beginning; but I know
It comes too late: 't will sweetest be of all
To dream my soul away and die upon.

[A noise without.]

The voice! Oh why, why glided sin the snake
Into the paradise Heaven meant us both?

[The window opens softly. A low voice sings.]

There's a woman like a dew-drop, she's so purer than the purest;
And her noble heart's the noblest, yes, and her sure faith's the
surest:

And her eyes are dark and humid, like the depth on depth of lustre
Hid i' the harebell, while her tresses, sunnier than the wild-grape
cluster,

Gush in golden-tinted plenty down her neck's rose-misted marble:
Then her voice's music . . call it the well's bubbling, the bird's
warble!

[A figure wrapped in a mantle appears at the window.]

And this woman says, "My days were sunless and my nights were
moonless,

"Parched the pleasant April herbage, and the lark's heart's out-
break tuneless,

"If you loved me not!" And I who—(ah, for words of flame!)
adore her,

Who am mad to lay my spirit prostrate palpably before her—

[He enters, approaches her seat, and bends over her.]

I may enter at her portal soon, as now her lattice takes me,
And by noontide as by midnight make her mine, as hers she
makes me!

[*The EARL throws off his slouched hat and long cloak.*

My very heart sings, so I sing, beloved!

Mil. Sit, Henry—do not take my hand!

Mer. 'T is mine.

The meeting that appalled us both so much
Is ended.

Mil. What begins now?

Mer. Happiness

Such as the world contains not.

Mil. That is it.

Our happiness would, as you say, exceed
The whole world's best of blisses: we—do we
Deserve that? Utter to your soul, what mine
Long since, Beloved, has grown used to hear,
Like a death-knell, so much regarded once,
And so familiar now; this will not be!

Mer. Oh Mildred, have I met your brother's face,
Compelled myself—if not to speak untruth,
Yet to disguise, to shun, to put aside
The truth, as—what had e'er prevailed on me
Save you, to venture? Have I gained at last
Your brother, the one scarer of your dreams,
And waking thoughts' sole apprehension too?
Does a new life, like a young sunrise, break
On the strange unrest of our night, confused
With rain and stormy flaw—and will you see
No dripping blossoms, no fire-tinted drops
On each live spray, no vapour steaming up,
And no expressless glory in the East?
When I am by you, to be ever by you,

When I have won you and may worship you,
Oh, Mildred, can you say "this will not be?"

Mil. Sin has surprised us; so will punishment.

Mer. No—me alone, who sinned alone!

Mil. The night

You likened our past life to—was it storm
Throughout to you then, Henry?

Mer. Of your life

I spoke—what am I, what my life, to waste
A thought about when you are by me?—you
It was, I said my folly called the storm
And pulled the night upon. 'T was day with me—
Perpetual dawn with me.

Mil. Come what, come will,

You have been happy: take my hand!

Mer. [after a pause.] How good

Your brother is! I figured him a cold—
Shall I say, haughty man?

Mil. They told me all.

I know all.

Mer. It will soon be over.

Mil. Over?

Oh, what is over? what must I live through
And say, "'t is over?" Is our meeting over?
Have I received in presence of them all
The partner of my guilty love,—with brow
Trying to seem a maiden's brow—with lips
Which make believe that when they strive to form
Replies to you and tremble as they strive,
It is the nearest ever they approached
A stranger's . . Henry, yours that stranger's . . lip—
With cheek that looks a virgin's, and that is . . .
Ah God, some prodigy of thine will stop

This planned piece of deliberate wickedness
In its birth even! some fierce leprous spot
Will mar the brow's dissimulating! I
Shall murmur no smooth speeches got by heart,
But, frenzied, pour forth all our woeful story,
The love, the shame, and the despair—with them
Round me aghast as men round some cursed fount
That should spirt water, and spouts blood. I'll not
. . . Henry, you do not wish that I should draw
This vengeance down? I'll not affect a grace
That's gone from me—gone once, and gone for ever!

Mer. Mildred, my honour is your own. I'll share
Disgrace I cannot suffer by myself.

A word informs your brother I retract
This morning's offer; time will yet bring forth
Some better way of saving both of us.

Mil. I'll meet their faces, Henry!

Mer. When? to-morrow!

Get done with it!

Mil. Oh Henry, not to-morrow!

Next day! I never shall prepare my words
And looks and gestures sooner.—How you must
Despise me!

Mer. Mildred, break it if you choose,
A heart the love of you uplifted—still
Uplifts, thro' this protracted agony,
To heaven! but Mildred, answer me,—first pace
The chamber with me—once again—now, say
Calmly the part, the . . what it is of me
You see contempt (for you did say contempt)
—Contempt for you in! I would pluck it off
And cast it from me!—but no—no, you'll not
Repeat that?—will you, Mildred, repeat that?

Mil. Dear Henry!

Mer. I was scarce a boy—e'en now
What am I more? And you were infantine
When first I met you; why, your hair fell loose
On either side! My fool's-cheek reddens now
Only in the recalling how it burned
That morn to see the shape of many a dream
—You know we boys are prodigal of charms
To her we dream of—I had heard of one,
Had dreamed of her, and I was close to her,
Might speak to her, might live and die her own,
Who knew? I spoke. Oh Mildred, feel you not
That now, while I remember every glance
Of yours, each word of yours, with power to test
And weigh them in the diamond scales of pride,
Resolved the treasure of a first and last
Heart's love shall have been bartered at its worth,
—That now I think upon your purity
And utter ignorance of guilt—your own
Or other's guilt—the girlish undisguised
Delight at a strange novel prize—(I talk
A silly language, but interpret, you!)
If I, with fancy at its full, and reason
Scarce in its germ, enjoined you secrecy,
If you had pity on my passion, pity
On my protested sickness of the soul
To sit beside you, hear you breathe, and watch
Your eyelids and the eyes beneath—if you
Accorded gifts and knew not they were gifts—
If I grew mad at last with enterprise
And must behold my beauty in her bower
Or perish—(I was ignorant of even
My own desires—what then were you?) if sorrow—

Sin—if the end came—must I now renounce
 My reason, blind myself to light, say truth
 Is false and lie to God and my own soul?
 Contempt were all of this!

Mil. Do you believe . .
 Or, Henry, I'll not wrong you—you believe
 That I was ignorant. I scarce grieve o'er
 The past! We'll love on; you will love me still!

Mer. Oh, to love less what one has injured! Dove,
 Whose pinion I have rashly hurt, my breast—
 Shall my heart's warmth not nurse thee into strength?
 Flower I have crushed, shall I not care for thee?
 Bloom o'er my crest, my fight-mark and device!
 Mildred, I love you and you love me!

Mil. Go!
 Be that your last word. I shall sleep to-night.

Mer. This is not our last meeting?

Mil. One night more.

Mer. And then—think, then!

Mil. Then, no sweet court-
 ship-days,

No dawning consciousness of love for us,
 No strange and palpitating births of sense
 From words and looks, no innocent fears and hopes,
 Reserves and confidences: morning's over!

Mer. How else should love's perfected noontide
 follow?

All the dawn promised shall the day perform.

Mil. So may it be! but——

You are cautious, Love?
 Are sure that unobserved you scaled the walls?

Mer. Oh, trust me! Then our final meeting's fixed?
 To-morrow night?

Mil. Farewell! Stay, Henry . . wherefore?
 His foot is on the yew-tree bough; the turf
 Receives him: now the moonlight as he runs
 Embraces him—but he must go—is gone.
 Ah, once again he turns—thanks, thanks, my love!
 He's gone. Oh I'll believe him every word!
 I was so young, I loved him so, I had
 No mother, God forgot me, and I fell.
 There may be pardon yet: all's doubt beyond.
 Surely the bitterness of death is past!

ACT II.

SCENE. *The Library.*

Enter LORD TRESHAM hastily.

This way! In, Gerard, quick!

[As GERARD enters, TRESHAM secures the door.

Now speak! or, wait—

I'll bid you speak directly.

[Seats himself.

Now repeat

Firmly and circumstantially the tale
 You just now told me; it eludes me; either
 I did not listen, or the half is gone
 Away from me. How long have you lived here?
 Here in my house, your father kept our woods
 Before you?

Ger. —As his father did, my lord.
 I have been eating, sixty years almost,
 Your bread.

Tresh. Yes, yes. You ever were of all

The servants in my father's house, I know,
The trusted one. You'll speak the truth.

Ger. I'll speak
God's truth. Night after night . . .

Tresh. Since when?

Ger. At least
A month—each midnight has some man access
To Lady Mildred's chamber.

Tresh. Tush, "access"—
No wide words like "access" to me!

Ger. He runs
Along the woodside, crosses to the South,
Takes the left tree that ends the avenue . . .

Tresh. The last great yew-tree?

Ger. You might stand upon
The main boughs like a platform. Then he . .

Tresh. Quick!

Ger. Climbs up, and, where they lessen at the
top,

—I cannot see distinctly, but he throws,
I think—for this I do not vouch—a line
That reaches to the lady's casement—

Tresh. —Which
He enters not! Gerard, some wretched fool
Dares pry into my sister's privacy!
When such are young, it seems a precious thing
To have approached,—to merely have approached,
Got sight of, the abode of her they set
Their frantic thoughts upon! He does not enter?
Gerard?

Ger. There is a lamp that's full i' the midst,
Under a red square in the painted glass
Of Lady Mildred's . . .

Tresh. Leave that name out! Well?
That lamp?

Ger. —Is moved at midnight higher up
To one pane—a small dark-blue pane; he waits
For that among the boughs: at sight of that,
I see him, plain as I see you, my lord,
Open the lady's casement, enter there . . .

Tresh.—And stay?

Ger. An hour, two hours.

Tresh. And this you saw
Once?—twice?—quick!

Ger. Twenty times.

Tresh. And what brings you
Under the yew-trees?

Ger. The first night I left
My range so far, to track the stranger stag
That broke the pale, I saw the man.

Tresh. Yet sent
No cross-bow shaft through the marauder?

Ger. But—
He came, my lord, the first time he was seen,
In a great moonlight, light as any day,
From Lady Mildred's chamber.

Tresh. [*after a pause.*] You have no cause
—Who could have cause to do my sister wrong?

Ger. Oh, my lord, only once—let me this once
Speak what is on my mind! Since first I noted
All this, I've groaned as if a fiery net
Plucked me this way and that—fire, if I turned
To her, fire if I turned to you, and fire,
If down I flung myself and strove to die.
The lady could not have been seven years old
When I was trusted to conduct her safe

Through the deer-herd to stroke the snow-white fawn
 I brought to eat bread from her tiny hand
 Within a month. She ever had a smile
 To greet me with—she . . if it could undo
 What's done, to lop each limb from off this trunk . .
 All that is foolish talk, not fit for you—
 I mean, I could not speak and bring her hurt
 For Heaven's compelling. But when I was fixed
 To hold my peace, each morsel of your food
 Eaten beneath your roof, my birth-place too,
 Choked me. I wish I had grown mad in doubts
 What it behoved me do. This morn it seemed
 Either I must confess to you, or die:
 Now it is done, I seem the vilest worm
 That crawls, to have betrayed my lady!

Tresh.

No—

No, Gerard!

Ger. Let me go!

Tresh.

A man, you say:

What man? Young? Not a vulgar hind? What dress?

Ger. A slouched hat and a large dark foreign cloak
 Wraps his whole form; even his face is hid;
 But I should judge him young: no hind, be sure!

Tresh. Why?

Ger. He is ever armed: his sword projects
 Beneath the cloak.

Tresh. Gerard,—I will not say
 No word, no breath of this!

Ger. Thanks, thanks, my lord! [*Goes.*

TRESHAM paces the room. After a pause,
 Oh, thought's absurd!—as with some monstrous fact
 Which, when ill thoughts beset us, seems to give
 Merciful God that made the sun and stars,

The waters and the green delights of earth,
 The lie! I apprehend the monstrous fact—
 Yet know the maker of all worlds is good,
 And yield my reason up, inadequate
 To reconcile what yet I do behold—
 Blasting my sense! There's cheerful day outside:
 This is my library, and this the chair
 My father used to sit in carelessly
 After his soldier-fashion, while I stood
 Between his knees to question him: and here
 Gerard our grey retainer,—as he says,
 Fed with our food, from sire to son, an age,—
 Has told a story—I am to believe!
 That Mildred . . . oh, no, no! both tales are true,
 Her pure cheek's story and the forester's!
 Would she, or could she, err—much less, confound
 All guilts of treachery, of craft, of . . . Heaven
 Keep me within its hand!—I will sit here
 Until thought settle and I see my course.
 Avert, oh God, only this woe from me!

*[As he sinks his head between his arms on the table,
 GUENDOLEN'S voice is heard at the door.]*

Lord Tresham! *[She knocks.]* Is Lord Tresham there?

*[TRESHAM, hastily turning, pulls down the first book
 above him and opens it.]*

Tresh. Come in! *[She enters.]*
 Ha Guendolen—good morning.

Guen. Nothing more?

Tresh. What should I say more?

Guen. Pleasant question! more?

This more. Did I besiege poor Mildred's brain
 Last night till close on morning with "the Earl,"
 "The Earl"—whose worth did I asseverate

Till I am very fain to hope that . . . Thorold,
What is all this? You are not well!

Tresh. Who, I?
You laugh at me.

Guen. Has what I'm fain to hope,
Arrived then? Does that huge tome show some blot
In the Earl's 'scutcheon come no longer back
Than Arthur's time?

Tresh. When left you Mildred's chamber?

Guen. Oh late enough, I told you! The main thing
To ask is, how I left her chamber,—sure,
Content yourself, she'll grant this paragon
Of Earls no such ungracious . . .

Tresh. Send her here!

Guen. Thorold?

Tresh. I mean—acquaint her, Guendolen,
—But mildly!

Guen. Mildly?

Tresh. Ah, you guessed aright!
I am not well: there is no hiding it.
But tell her I would see her at her leisure—
That is, at once! here in the library!
The passage in that old Italian book
We hunted for so long is found, say, found—
And if I let it slip again . . you see,
That she must come—and instantly!

Guen. I'll die
Piecemeal, record that, if there have not gloomed
Some blot i' the 'scutcheon!

Tresh. Go! or, Guendolen,
Be you at call,—with Austin, if you choose,—
In the adjoining gallery! There go! [GUENDOLEN goes.
Another lesson to me! You might bid

A child disguise his heart's sore, and conduct
Some sly investigation point by point
With a smooth brow, as well as bid me catch
The inquisitorial cleverness some praise!
If you had told me yesterday, "There's one
"You needs must circumvent and practise with,
"Entrap by policies, if you would worm
"The truth out: and that one is—Mildred!" There,
There—reasoning is thrown away on it!
Prove she's unchaste . . . why, you may after prove
That she's a poisoner, traitress, what you will!
Where I can comprehend nought, nought's to say.
Or do, or think! Force on me but the first
Abomination,—then outpour all plagues,
And I shall ne'er make count of them!

Enter MILDRED.

Mil. What book
Is it I wanted, Thorold? Guendolen
Thought you were pale; you are not pale. That book?
That's Latin surely.

Tresh. Mildred, here's a line,
(Don't lean on me: I'll English it for you)
"Love conquers all things." What love conquers them?
What love should you esteem—best love?

Mil. True love.

Tresh. I mean, and should have said, whose love is
best
Of all that love or that profess to love?

Mil. The list's so long: there's father's, mother's,
husband's . . .

Tresh. Mildred, I do believe a brother's love
For a sole sister must exceed them all.
For see now, only see! there's no alloy

Of earth that creeps into the perfect'st gold
Of other loves—no gratitude to claim;
You never gave her life, not even aught
That keeps life—never tended her, instructed,
Enriched her—so your love can claim no right
O'er her save pure love's claim: that's what I call
Freedom from earthliness. You'll never hope
To be such friends, for instance, she and you,
As when you hunted cowslips in the woods
Or played together in the meadow hay.
Oh yes—with age, respect comes, and your worth
Is felt, there's growing sympathy of tastes,
There's ripened friendship, there's confirmed esteem:
—Much head these make against the new comer!
The startling apparition, the strange youth—
Whom one half-hour's conversing with, or, say,
Mere gazing at, shall change (beyond all change
This Ovid ever sang about) your soul
. . . Her soul, that is,—the sister's soul! With her
'T was winter yesterday; now, all is warmth,
The green leaf's springing and the turtle's voice,
"Arise and come away!" Come whither?—far
Enough from the esteem, respect, and all
The brother's somewhat insignificant
Array of rights! All which he knows before,
Has calculated on so long ago!
I think such love, (apart from yours and mine,)
Contented with its little term of life,
Intending to retire betimes, aware
How soon the background must be place for it,
—I think, am sure, a brother's love exceeds
All the world's love in its unworldliness.

Mil. What is this for?

Tresh. This, Mildred, is it for!
 Or, no, I cannot go to it so soon!
 That's one of many points my haste left out—
 Each day, each hour throws forth its silk-slight film
 Between the being tied to you by birth,
 And you, until those slender threads compose
 A web that shrouds her daily life of hopes
 And fears and fancies, all her life, from yours:
 So close you live and yet so far apart!
 And must I rend this web, tear up, break down
 The sweet and palpitating mystery
 That makes her sacred? You—for you I mean,
 Shall I speak, shall I not speak?

Mil.

Speak!

Tresh.

I will.

Is there a story men could—any man
 Could tell of you, you would conceal from me?
 I'll never think there's falsehood on that lip.
 Say "There is no such story men could tell,"
 And I'll believe you, though I disbelieve
 The world—the world of better men than I,
 And women such as I suppose you. Speak!
 [*After a pause.*] Not speak? Explain then! Clear it up
 then! Move

Some of the miserable weight away
 That presses lower than the grave! Not speak?
 Some of the dead weight, Mildred! Ah, if I
 Could bring myself to plainly make their charge
 Against you! Must I, Mildred? Silent still?

[*After a pause.*] Is there a gallant that has night by
 night

Admittance to your chamber?

[*After a pause.*]

Then, his name!

Till now, I only had a thought for you:
But now,—his name!

Mil. Thorold, do you devise
Fit expiation for my guilt, if fit
There be! 'T is nought to say that I'll endure
And bless you,—that my spirit yearns to purge
Her stains off in the fierce renewing fire:
But do not plunge me into other guilt!
Oh, guilt enough! I cannot tell his name.

Tresh. Then judge yourself! How should I act?
Pronounce!

Mil. Oh, Thorold, you must never tempt me thus!
To die here in this chamber by that sword
Would seem like punishment: so should I glide,
Like an arch-cheat, into extremest bliss!
'T were easily arranged for me! but you—
What would become of you?

Tresh. And what will now
Become of me? I'll hide your shame and mine
From every eye; the dead must heave their hearts
Under the marble of our chapel-floor;
They cannot rise and blast you. You may wed
Your paramour above our mother's tomb;
Our mother cannot move from 'neath your foot.
We too will somehow wear this one day out:
But with to-morrow hastens here—the Earl!
The youth without suspicion that faces come
From heaven, and hearts from . . . whence proceed
such hearts?

I have dispatched last night at your command
A missive bidding him present himself
To-morrow—here—thus much is said; the rest
Is understood as if 't were written down—

"His suit finds favour in your eyes:"—now dictate
This morning's letter that shall countermand
Last night's—do dictate that!

Mil. But Thorold—if
I will receive him as I said?

Tresh. The Earl?

Mil. I will receive him.

Tresh. [*Starting up.*] Ho there! Guendolen!

GUENDOLEN and AUSTIN enter.

And, Austin, you are welcome, too! Look there!
The woman there!

Aus. & Guen. How? Mildred?

Tresh. Mildred once!

Now the receiver night by night, when sleep
Blesses the inmates of her father's house,
—I say, the soft sly wanton that receives
Her guilt's accomplice 'neath this roof which holds
You, Guendolen, you, Austin, and has held
A thousand Treshams—never one like her!
No lighter of the signal-lamp her quick
Foul breath near quenches in hot eagerness
To mix with breath as foul! no loosener
O' the lattice, practised in the stealthy tread,
The low voice and the noiseless come-and-go!
Not one composer of the bacchant's mien
Into—what you thought Mildred's, in a word!
Know her!

Guen. Oh Mildred, look to me, at least!
Thorold—she's dead, I'd say, but that she stands
Rigid as stone and whiter!

Tresh. You have heard . . .

Guen. Too much! You must proceed no further.

Mil.

Yes—

Proceed! All 's truth. Go from me!

Tresh.

All is truth,

She tells you! Well, you know, or ought to know,

All this I would forgive in her. I'd con

Each precept the harsh world enjoins, I'd take

Our ancestors' stern verdicts one by one,

I'd bind myself before them to exact

The prescribed vengeance—and one word of hers,

The sight of her, the bare least memory

Of Mildred, my one sister, my heart's pride

Above all prides, my all in all so long,

Would scatter every trace of my resolve.

What were it silently to waste away

And see her waste away from this day forth,

Two scathed things with leisure to repent,

And grow acquainted with the grave, and die

Tired out if not at peace, and be forgotten?

It were not so impossible to bear.

But this—that, fresh from last night's pledge renewed

Of love with the successful gallant there,

She calmly bids me help her to entice, *new**new* Inveigle an unconscious trusting youth

Who thinks her all that's chaste and good and pure,

—Invites me to betray him . . . who so fit

As honour's self to cover shame's arch-deed?

—That she'll receive Lord Mertoun—(her own phrase)—

This, who could bear? Why, you have heard of thieves,

Stabbers, the earth's disgrace, who yet have laughed,

"Talk not to me of torture—I'll betray

"No comrade I've pledged faith to!"—you have heard

Of wretched women—all but Mildreds—tied

By wild illicit ties to losels vile

You'd tempt them to forsake; and they'll reply
 "Gold, friends, repute, I left for him, I find
 "In him, why should I leave him then for gold,
 "Repute or friends?"—and you have felt your heart
 Respond to such poor outcasts of the world
 As to so many friends; bad as you please,
 You've felt they were God's men and women still,
 So, not to be disowned by you. But she
 That stands there, calmly gives her lover up
 As means to wed the Earl that she may hide
 Their intercourse the surelier; and, for this,
 I curse her to her face before you all.
 Shame hunt her from the earth! Then Heaven do right
 To both! It hears me now—shall judge her then!

[*As MILDRED faints and falls, TRESHAM rushes out.*]

Aus. Stay, Tresham, we'll accompany you!

Guen.

We?

What, and leave Mildred? We? Why, where's my
 place

But by her side, and where yours but by mine?
 Mildred—one word! Only look at me, then!

Aus. No, Guendolen! I echo Thorold's voice.
 She is unworthy to behold . . .

Guen.

Us two?

If you spoke on reflection, and if I
 Approved your speech—if you (to put the thing
 At lowest) you the soldier, bound to make
 The king's cause yours and fight for it, and throw
 Regard to others of its right or wrong,
 —If with a death-white woman you can help,
 Let alone sister, let alone a Mildred,
 You left her—or if I, her cousin, friend
 This morning, playfellow but yesterday,

Who said, or thought at least a thousand times,
"I'd serve you if I could," should now face round
And say, "Ah that's to only signify
"I'd serve you while you're fit to serve yourself—
"So long as fifty eyes await the turn
"Of yours to forestall its yet half-formed wish,
"I'll proffer my assistance you'll not need—
"When every tongue is praising you, I'll join
"The praisers' chorus—when you're hemmed about
"With lives between you and detraction—lives
"To be laid down if a rude voice, rash eye,
"Rough hand should violate the sacred ring
"Their worship throws about you,—then indeed,
"Who'll stand up for you stout as I?" If so
We said, and so we did,—not Mildred there
Would be unworthy to behold us both,
But we should be unworthy, both of us,
To be beheld by—by—your meanest dog,
Which, if that sword were broken in your face
Before a crowd, that badge torn off your breast,
And you cast out with hooting and contempt,
—Would push his way thro' all the hooters, gain
Your side, go off with you and all your shame
To the next ditch you choose to die in! Austin,
Do you love me? Here's Austin, Mildred,—here's
Your brother says he does not believe half—
No, nor half that—of all he heard! He says,
Look up and take his hand!

Aus. Look up and take
My hand, dear Mildred!

Mil. I—I was so young!
Beside, I loved him, Thorold—and I had
No mother; God forgot me: so I fell.

Guen. Mildred!

Mil. Require no further! Did I dream
That I could palliate what is done? All's true.
Now, punish me! A woman takes my hand?
Let go my hand! You do not know, I see.
I thought that Thorold told you.

Guen. What is this?
Where start you to?

Mil. Oh Austin, loosen me!
You heard the whole of it—your eyes were worse,
In their surprise, than Thorold's! Oh, unless
You stay to execute his sentence, loose
My hand! Has Thorold gone, and are you here?

Guen. Here, Mildred, we two friends of yours will
wait

Your bidding; be you silent, sleep or muse!
Only, when you shall want your bidding done,
How can we do it if we are not by?
Here's Austin waiting patiently your will!
One spirit to command, and one to love
And to believe in it and do its best,
Poor as that is, to help it—why, the world
Has been won many a time, its length and breadth,
By just such a beginning!

Mil. I believe
If once I threw my arms about your neck
And sunk my head upon your breast, that I
Should weep again.

Guen. Let go her hand now, Austin!
Wait for me. Pace the gallery and think
On the world's seemings and realities,
Until I call you. [AUSTIN goes.

Mil. No—I cannot weep.

No more tears from this brain—no sleep—no tears!
O Guendolen, I love you!

Guen. Yes: and "love"
Is a short word that says so very much!
It says that you confide in me.

Mil. Confide!

Guen. Your lover's name, then! I've so much to
learn,
Ere I can work in your behalf!

Mil. My friend,
You know I cannot tell his name.

Guen. At least
He is your lover? and you love him too?

Mil. Ah, do you ask me that?—but I am fallen
So low!

Guen. You love him still, then?

Mil. My sole prop
Against the guilt that crushes me! I say,
Each night ere I lie down, "I was so young—
"I had no mother, and I loved him so!"
And then God seems indulgent, and I dare
Trust him my soul in sleep.

Guen. How could you let us
E'en talk to you about Lord Mertoun then?

Mil. There is a cloud around me.

Guen. But you said
You would receive his suit in spite of this?

Mil. I say there is a cloud . . .

Guen. No cloud to me!
Lord Mertoun and your lover are the same!

Mil. What maddest fancy . . .

Guen. [*calling aloud.*] Austin! (spare your pains—
When I have got a truth, that truth I keep)—

Mil. By all you love, sweet Guendolen, forbear!
Have I confided in you . . .

Guen. Just for this!
Austin!—Oh, not to guess it at the first!
But I did guess it—that is, I divined,
Felt by an instinct how it was: why else
Should I pronounce you free from all that heap
Of sins which had been irredeemable?
I felt they were not yours—what other way
Than this, not yours? The secret's wholly mine!

Mil. If you would see me die before his face . . .

Guen. I'd hold my peace! And if the Earl returns
To-night?

Mil. Ah Heaven, he's lost!

Guen. I thought so. Austin!

Enter AUSTIN.

Oh, where have you been hiding?

Aus. Thorold's gone,
I know not how, across the meadow-land.
I watched him till I lost him in the skirts
O' the beech-wood.

Guen. Gone? All thwarts us.

Mil. Thorold too?

Guen. I have thought. First lead this Mildred to
her room.

Go on the other side; and then we'll seek
Your brother: and I'll tell you, by the way,
The greatest comfort in the world. You said
There was a clue to all. Remember, Sweet,
He said there was a clue! I hold it. Come!

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The end of the Yew-tree Avenue under MILDRED'S window. A light seen through a central red pane.*

Enter TRESHAM through the trees.

Again here! But I cannot lose myself.
The heath—the orchard—I have traversed glades
And dells and bosky paths which used to lead
Into green wild-wood depths, bewildering
My boy's adventurous step. And now they tend
Hither or soon or late; the blackest shade
Breaks up, the thronged trunks of the trees ope wide,
And the dim turret I have fled from, fronts
Again my step; the very river put
Its arm about me and conducted me
To this detested spot. Why then, I'll shun
Their will no longer: do your will with me!
Oh, bitter! To have reared a towering scheme
Of happiness, and to behold it razed,
Were nothing: all men hope, and see their hopes
Frustrate, and grieve awhile, and hope anew.
But I . . . to hope that from a line like ours
No horrid prodigy like this would spring,
Were just as though I hoped that from these old
Confederates against the sovereign day,
Children of older and yet older sires,
Whose living coral berries dropped, as now
On me, on many a baron's surcoat once,
On many a beauty's wimple—would proceed
No poison-tree, to thrust, from hell its root,
Hither and thither its strange snaky arms.

Why came I here? What must I do? [*a bell strikes.*]

A bell?

Midnight! and 't is at midnight . . . Ah, I catch
—Woods, river, plains, I catch your meaning now,
And I obey you! Hist! This tree will serve.

[*He retires behind one of the trees. After a pause, enter
MERTOUN cloaked as before.*]

Mer. Not time! Beat out thy last voluptuous beat
Of hope and fear, my heart! I thought the clock
I' the chapel struck as I was pushing through
The ferns. And so I shall no more see rise
My love-star! Oh, no matter for the past!
So much the more delicious task to watch
Mildred revive: to pluck out, thorn by thorn,
All traces of the rough forbidden path
My rash love lured her to! Each day must see
Some fear of hers effaced, some hope renewed:
Then there will be surprises, unforeseen
Delights in store. I'll not regret the past.

[*The light is placed above in the purple pane.*]

And see, my signal rises, Mildred's star!
I never saw it lovelier than now
It rises for the last time. If it sets,
'T is that the re-assuring sun may dawn.

[*As he prepares to ascend the last tree of the avenue,
TRESHAM arrests his arm.*]

Unhand me—peasant, by your grasp! Here's gold.
'T was a mad freak of mine. I said I'd pluck
A branch from the white-blossomed shrub beneath
The casement there. Take this, and hold your peace.

Tresh. Into the moonlight yonder, come with me!
—Out of the shadow!

Mer.

I am armed, fool!

Tresh. Yes,
Or no? You'll come into the light, or no?
My hand is on your throat—refuse!—

Mer. That voice!
Where have I heard . . . no—that was mild and slow.
I'll come with you. [*They advance.*]

Tresh. You're armed: that's well. Declare
Your name—who are you?

Mer. (Tresham!—she is lost!)

Tresh. Oh, silent? Do you know, you bear yourself
Exactly as, in curious dreams I've had
How felons, this wild earth is full of, look
When they're detected, still your kind has looked!
The bravo holds an assured countenance,
The thief is voluble and plausible,
But silently the slave of lust has crouched
When I have fancied it before a man.
Your name?

Mer. I do conjure Lord Tresham—ay,
Kissing his foot, if so I might prevail—
That he for his own sake forbear to ask
My name! As heaven's above, his future weal
Or woe depends upon my silence! Vain!
I read your white inexorable face.
Know me, Lord Tresham! [*He throws off his disguises.*]

Tresh. Mertoun!

[*After a pause.*] Draw now!

Mer. Hear me
But speak first!

Tresh. Not one least word on your life!
Be sure that I will strangle in your throat
The least word that informs me how you live
And yet seem what you seem! No doubt 't was you

Taught Mildred still to keep that face and sin.
We should join hands in frantic sympathy
If you once taught me the unteachable,
Explained how you can live so, and so lie.
With God's help I retain, despite my sense,
The old belief—a life like yours is still
Impossible. Now draw!

Mer. Not for my sake,
Do I entreat a hearing—for your sake,
And most, for her sake!

Tresh. Ha ha, what should I
Know of your ways? A miscreant like yourself,
How must one rouse his ire? A blow?—that's pride
No doubt, to him! One spurns him, does one not?
Or sets the foot upon his mouth, or spits
Into his face! Come! Which, or all of these?

Mer. 'Twixt him and me and Mildred, Heaven be
judge!
Can I avoid this? Have your will, my lord!

[He draws and, after a few passes, falls.]

Tresh. You are not hurt?

Mer. You'll hear me now!

Tresh. But rise!

Mer. Ah Tresham, say I not "you'll hear me now!"
And what procures a man the right to speak
In his defence before his fellow-man,
But—I suppose—the thought that presently
He may have leave to speak before his God
His whole defence?

Tresh. Not hurt? It cannot be!
You made no effort to resist me. Where
Did my sword reach you? Why not have returned
My thrusts? Hurt where?

Mer.

My lord—

Tresh.

How young he is!

Mer. Lord Tresham, I am very young, and yet
I have entangled other lives with mine.

Do let me speak, and do believe my speech!

That when I die before you presently,—

Tresh. Can you stay here till I return with help?*Mer.* Oh, stay by me! When I was less than boy
I did you grievous wrong and knew it not—

Upon my honour, knew it not! Once known,

I could not find what seemed a better way

To right you than I took: my life—you feel

How less than nothing were the giving you

The life you've taken! But I thought my way

The better—only for your sake and hers:

And as you have decided otherwise,

Would I had an infinity of lives

To offer you! Now say—instruct me—think

Can you from the brief minutes I have left

Eke out my reparation? Oh think—think!

For I must wring a partial—dare I say,

Forgiveness from you, ere I die?

Tresh.

I do

Forgive you.

Mer.

Wait and ponder that great word!

Because, if you forgive me, I shall hope

To speak to you of—Mildred!

Tresh.

Mertoun, haste

And anger have undone us. 'T is not you

Should tell me for a novelty you're young,

Thoughtless, unable to recall the past.

Be but your pardon ample as my own!

Mer. Ah Tresham, that a sword-stroke and a drop

Of blood or two, should bring all this about!
 Why, 't was my very fear of you, my love
 Of you—(what passion like a boy's for one
 Like you?)—that ruined me! I dreamed of you—
 You, all accomplished, courted everywhere,
 The scholar and the gentleman. I burned
 To knit myself to you: but I was young,
 And your surpassing reputation kept me
 So far aloof! Oh, wherefore all that love?
 With less of love, my glorious yesterday
 Of praise and gentlest words and kindest looks,
 Had taken place perchance six months ago.
 Even now, how happy we had been! And yet
 I know the thought of this escaped you, Tresham!
 Let me look up into your face; I feel
 'T is changed above me: yet my eyes are glazed.
 Where? where?

[As he endeavours to raise himself, his eye catches the lamp.]

Ah, Mildred! What will Mildred do?
 Tresham, her life is bound up in the life
 That's bleeding fast away! I'll live—must live,
 There, if you'll only turn me I shall live
 And save her! Tresham—oh, had you but heard!
 Had you but heard! What right was yours to set
 The thoughtless foot upon her life and mine,
 And then say, as we perish, "Had I thought,
 "All had gone otherwise?" We've sinned and die:
 Never you sin, Lord Tresham! for you'll die,
 And God will judge you.

Tresh.

Yes, be satisfied!

That process is begun.

Mer.

And she sits there

Waiting for me! Now, say you this to her—

You, not another—say, I saw him die
 As he breathed this, “I love her”—you don’t know
 What those three small words mean! Say, loving her
 Lowers me down the bloody slope to death
 With memories . . . I speak to her, not you,
 Who had no pity, will have no remorse,
 Perchance intend her . . . Die along with me,
 Dear Mildred! ’t is so easy, and you’ll ’scape
 So much unkindness! Can I lie at rest,
 With rude speech spoken to you, ruder deeds
 Done to you?—heartless men shall have my heart,
 And I tied down with grave-clothes and the worm,
 Aware, perhaps, of every blow—oh God!—
 Upon those lips—yet of no power to tear
 The felon stripe by stripe! Die, Mildred! Leave
 Their honourable world to them! For God
 We’re good enough, though the world casts us out.

[*A whistle is heard.*]

Tresh. Ho, Gerard!

Enter GERARD, AUSTIN and GUENDOLEN, with lights.

No one speak! You see what’s done.
 I cannot bear another voice.

Mer. There’s light—
 Light all about me, and I move to it.
 Tresham, did I not tell you—did you not
 Just promise to deliver words of mine
 To Mildred?

Tresh. I will bear those words to her.

Mer. Now?

Tresh. Now. Lift you the body, and leave me
 The head.

[*As they have half raised MERTOUN, he turns suddenly.*]

Mer. I knew they turned me: turn me not from her!
There! stay you! there! *[Dies.]*

Guen. *[after a pause.]* Austin, remain you here
With Thorold until Gerard comes with help:
Then lead him to his chamber. I must go
To Mildred.

Tresh. Guendolen, I hear each word
You utter. Did you hear him bid me give
His message? Did you hear my promise? I,
And only I, see Mildred.

Guen. She will die.

Tresh. Oh no, she will not die! I dare not hope
She'll die. What ground have you to think she'll die?
Why, Austin's with you!

Aus. Had we but arrived
Before you fought!

Tresh. There was no fight at all.
He let me slaughter him—the boy! I'll trust
The body there to you and Gerard—thus!
Now bear him on before me.

Aus. Whither bear him?

Tresh. Oh, to my chamber! When we meet there
next,
We shall be friends.

[They bear out the body of MERTOUN.]
Will she die, Guendolen?

Guen. Where are you taking me?

Tresh. He fell just here.
Now answer me. Shall you in your whole life
—You who have nought to do with Mertoun's fate,
Now you have seen his breast upon the turf,
Shall you e'er walk this way if you can help?
When you and Austin wander arm-in-arm

Through our ancestral grounds, will not a shade
Be ever on the meadow and the waste—
Another kind of shade than when the night
Shuts the woodside with all its whispers up?
But will you ever so forget his breast
As carelessly to cross this bloody turf
Under the black yew avenue? That's well!
You turn your head: and I then?—

Guen. What is done
Is done. My care is for the living. Thorold,
Bear up against this burden: more remains
To set the neck to!

Tresh. Dear and ancient trees
My fathers planted, and I loved so well!
What have I done that, like some fabled crime
Of yore, lets loose a fury leading thus
Her miserable dance amidst you all?
Oh, never more for me shall winds intone
With all your tops a vast antiphony,
Demanding and responding in God's praise!
Hers ye are now, not mine! Farewell—farewell!

SCENE II. MILDRED'S *Chamber*. MILDRED *alone*.

He comes not! I have heard of those who seemed
Resourceless in prosperity,—you thought
Sorrow might slay them when she listed; yet
Did they so gather up their diffused strength
At her first menace, that they bade her strike,
And stood and laughed her subtlest skill to scorn.
Oh, 't is not so with me! The first woe fell,
And the rest fall upon it, not on me:
Else should I bear that Henry comes not?—fails

Just this first night out of so many nights?
 Loving is done with. Were he sitting now,
 As so few hours since, on that seat, we'd love
 No more—contrive no thousand happy ways
 To hide love from the loveless, any more.
 I think I might have urged some little point
 In my defence, to Thorold; he was breathless
 For the least hint of a defence: but no,
 The first shame over, all that would might fall.
 No Henry! Yet I merely sit and think
 The morn's deed o'er and o'er. I must have crept
 Out of myself. A Mildred that has lost
 Her lover—oh I dare not look upon
 Such woe! I crouch away from it! 'T is she,
 Mildred, will break her heart, not I! The world
 Forsakes me: only Henry's left me—left?
 When I have lost him, for he does not come,
 And I sit stupidly . . . Oh Heaven, break up
 This worse than anguish, this mad apathy,
 By any means or any messenger!

Tresh. [*without.*] Mildred!

Mil. Come in! Heaven hears me!

[*Enter TRESHAM.*] You? alone?

Oh, no more cursing!

Tresh. Mildred, I must sit.

There—you sit!

Mil. Say it, Thorold—do not look
 The curse! deliver all you come to say!
 What must become of me? Oh speak that thought
 Which makes your brow and cheek so pale!

Tresh. My thought?

Mil. All of it!

Tresh. How we waded—years ago—

After those water-lilies, till the splash,
 I know not how, surprised us; and you dared
 Neither advance nor turn back: so, we stood
 Laughing and crying until Gerard came—
 Once safe upon the turf, the loudest too,
 For once more reaching the relinquished prize!
 How idle thoughts are, some men's, dying men's!
 Mildred,—

Mil. You call me kindlier by my name
 Than even yesterday: what is in that?

Tresh. It weighs so much upon my mind that I
 This morning took an office not my own!
 I might . . of course, I must be glad or grieved,
 Content or not, at every little thing
 That touches you. I may with a wrung heart
 Even reprove you, Mildred; I did more:
 Will you forgive me?

Mil. Thorold? do you mock?
 Or no . . and yet you bid me . . say that word!

Tresh. Forgive me, Mildred!—are you silent, Sweet?

Mil. [*starting up.*] Why does not Henry Mertoun
 come to-night?

Are you, too, silent?

[*Dashing his mantle aside, and pointing to his scabbard,
 which is empty.*]

Ah, this speaks for you!
 You've murdered Henry Mertoun! Now proceed!
 What is it I must pardon? This and all?
 Well, I do pardon you—I think I do.
 Thorold, how very wretched you must be!

Tresh. He bade me tell you . .

Mil. What I do forbid
 Your utterance of! So much that you may tell

And will not—how you murdered him . . but, no!
You'll tell me that he loved me, never more
Than bleeding out his life there: must I say
"Indeed," to that? Enough! I pardon you.

Tresh. You cannot, Mildred! for the harsh words, yes:
Of this last deed Another's judge: whose doom
I wait in doubt, despondency and fear.

Mil. Oh, true! There's nought for me to pardon!
True!

You loose my soul of all its cares at once.
Death makes me sure of him for ever! You
Tell me his last words? He shall tell me them,
And take my answer—not in words, but reading
Himself the heart I had to read him late,
Which death . . .

Tresh. Death? You are dying too? Well said
Of Guendolen! I dared not hope you'd die:
But she was sure of it.

Mil. Tell Guendolen
I loved her, and tell Austin . . .

Tresh. Him you loved:
And me?

Mil. Ah Thorold! Was't not rashly done
To quench that blood, on fire with youth and hope
And love of me—whom you loved too, and yet
Suffered to sit here waiting his approach
While you were slaying him? Oh doubtlessly
You let him speak his poor confused boy's-speech
—Do his poor utmost to disarm your wrath
And respite me!—you let him try to give
The story of our love and ignorance,
And the brief madness and the long despair—
You let him plead all this, because your code

Of honour bids you hear before you strike:
But at the end, as he looked up for life
Into your eyes—you struck him down!

Tresh.

No! no!

Had I but heard him—had I let him speak
Half the truth—less—had I looked long on him
I had desisted! Why, as he lay there,
The moon on his flushed cheek, I gathered all
The story ere he told it: I saw through
The troubled surface of his crime and yours
A depth of purity immovable;
Had I but glanced, where all seemed turbidest
Had gleamed some inlet to the calm beneath;
I would not glance: my punishment's at hand.
There, Mildred, is the truth! and you—say on—
You curse me?

Mil.

As I dare approach that Heaven
Which has not bade a living thing despair,
Which needs no code to keep its grace from stain,
But bids the vilest worm that turns on it
Desist and be forgiven,—I—forgive not,
But bless you, Thorold, from my soul of souls!

[*Falls on his neck.*

There! Do not think too much upon the past!
The cloud that's broke was all the same a cloud
While it stood up between my friend and you;
You hurt him 'neath its shadow: but is that
So past retrieve? I have his heart, you know;
I may dispose of it: I give it you!
It loves you as mine loves! Confirm me, Henry!

[*Dies.*

Tresh. I wish thee joy, Beloved! I am glad
In thy full gladness!

Guen. [*without.*] Mildred! Tresham!

[*Entering with AUSTIN.*] Thorold,
I could desist no longer. Ah, she swoons!
That's well.

Tresh. Oh, better far than that!

Guen. She's dead!
Let me unlock her arms!

Tresh. She threw them thus
About my neck, and blessed me, and then died:
You'll let them stay now, Guendolen!

Aus. Leave her
And look to him! What ails you, Thorold?

Guen. White
As she, and whiter! Austin! quick—this side!

Aus. A froth is oozing through his clenched teeth;
Both lips, where they're not bitten through, are black:
Speak, dearest Thorold!

Tresh. Something does weigh down
My neck beside her weight: thanks: I should fall
But for you, Austin, I believe!—there, there,
'T will pass away soon!—ah,—I had forgotten:
I am dying.

Guen. Thorold—Thorold—why was this?

Tresh. I said, just as I drank the poison off,
The earth would be no longer earth to me,
The life out of all life was gone from me.
There are blind ways provided, the foredone
Heart-weary player in this pageant-world
Drops out by, letting the main masque defile
By the conspicuous portal: I am through—
Just through!

Guen. Don't leave him, Austin! Death is close.

Tresh. Already Mildred's face is peacefuller.

I see you, Austin—feel you: here's my hand,
Put yours in it—you, Guendolen, yours too!
You're lord and lady now—you're Treshams; name
And fame are yours: you hold our 'scutcheon up.
Austin, no blot on it! You see how blood
Must wash one blot away: the first blot came
And the first blood came. To the vain world's eye
All's gules again: no care to the vain world,
From whence the red was drawn!

Aus. No blot shall come!

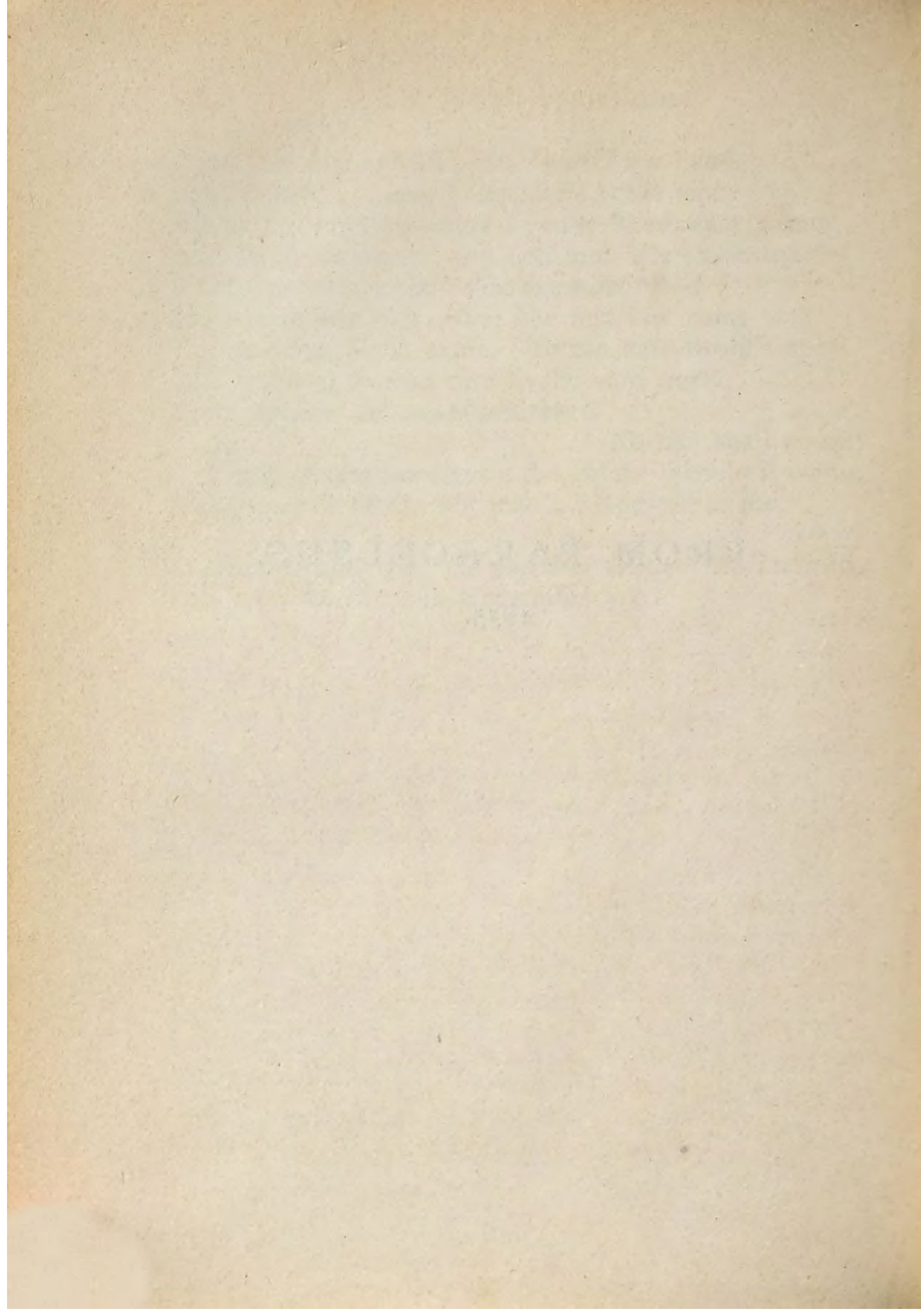
Tresh. I said that: yet it did come. Should it come,
Vengeance is God's, not man's. Remember me!

[*Dies.*

Guen. [*letting fall the pulseless arm.*] Ah Thorold,
we can but—remember you!

FROM PARACELSUS.

1835.



FROM PARACELSUS.

PARACELSUS ATTAINS.

SCENE, *Salzburg; a cell in the Hospital of St. Sebastian.* 1541.

FESTUS, PARACELSUS.

Fest. No change! The weary night is well-nigh spent,
The lamp burns low, and through the casement-bars
Grey morning glimmers feebly: yet no change!
Another night, and still no sigh has stirred
That fallen discoloured mouth, no pang relit
Those fixed eyes, quenched by the decaying body,
Like torch-flame choked in dust. While all beside
Was breaking, to the last they held out bright,
As a stronghold where life intrenched itself;
But they are dead now—very blind and dead:
He will drowse into death without a groan.

My Aureole—my forgotten, ruined Aureole!
The days are gone, are gone! How grand thou wast!
And now not one of those who struck thee down—
Poor glorious spirit—concerns him even to stay
And satisfy himself his little hand
Could turn God's image to a livid thing.
Another night, and yet no change! 'T is much
That I should sit by him, and bathe his brow,
And chafe his hands; 't is much: but he will sure

Know me, and look on me, and speak to me
Once more—but only once! His hollow cheek
Looked all night long as though a creeping laugh
At his own state were just about to break
From the dying man: my brain swam, my throat swelled,
And yet I could not turn away. In truth,
They told me how, when first brought here, he seemed
Resolved to live, to lose no faculty;
Thus striving to keep up his shattered strength,
Until they bore him to this stifling cell:
When straight his features fell, an hour made white
The flushed face, and relaxed the quivering limb,
Only the eye remained intense awhile
As though it recognized the tomb-like place,
And then he lay as here he lies.

Ay, here!

Here is earth's noblest, nobly garlanded—
Her bravest champion with his well-won prize—
Her best achievement, her sublime amends
For countless generations fleeting fast
And followed by no trace;—the creature-god
She instances when angels would dispute
The title of her brood to rank with them.
Angels, this is our angel! Those bright forms
We clothe with purple, crown and call to thrones,
Are human, but not his; those are but men
Whom other men press round and kneel before;
Those palaces are dwelt in by mankind;
Higher provision is for him you seek
Amid our pomps and glories: see it here!
Behold earth's paragon! Now, raise thee, clay!
God! Thou art love! I build my faith on that!
Even as I watch beside thy tortured child

Unconscious whose hot tears fall fast by him,
So doth thy right hand guide us through the world
Wherein we stumble. God! what shall we say?
How has he sinned? How else should he have done?
Surely he sought thy praise—thy praise, for all
He might be busied by the task so much
As half forget awhile its proper end.
Dost thou well, Lord? Thou canst not but prefer
That I should range myself upon his side—
How could he stop at every step to set
Thy glory forth? Hadst thou but granted him
Success, thy honour would have crowned success,
A halo round a star. Or, say he erred,—
Save him, dear God; it will be like thee: bathe him
In light and life! Thou art not made like us;
We should be wroth in such a case; but thou
Forgivest—so, forgive these passionate thoughts
Which come unsought and will not pass away!
I know thee, who hast kept my path, and made
Light for me in the darkness, tempering sorrow
So that it reached me like a solemn joy;
It were too strange that I should doubt thy love.
But what am I? Thou madest him and knowest
How he was fashioned. I could never err
That way: the quiet place beside thy feet,
Reserved for me, was ever in my thoughts:
But he—thou shouldst have favoured him as well!
Ah! he awakens! Aureole, I am here! 't is Festus!
I cast away all wishes save one wish—
Let him but know me, only speak to me!
He mutters; louder and louder; any other
Than I, with brain less laden, could collect
What he pours forth. Dear Aureole, do but look!

Is it talking or singing, this he utters fast?
Misery that he should fix me with his eye,
Quick talking to some other all the while!
If he would husband this wild vehemence
Which frustrates its intent!—I heard, I know
I heard my name amid those rapid words,
Oh, he will know me yet! Could I divert
This current, lead it somehow gently back
Into the channels of the past!—His eye
Brighter than ever! It must recognize me!

I am Erasmus: I am here to pray
That Paracelsus use his skill for me.
The schools of Paris and of Padua send
These questions for your learning to resolve.
We are your students, noble master: leave
This wretched cell, what business have you here?
Our class awaits you; come to us once more!
(O agony! the utmost I can do
Touches him not; how else arrest his ear?)
I am commissioned . . . I shall craze like him.
Better be mute and see what God shall send.

Par. Stay, stay with me!

Fest. I will; I am come here
To stay with you—Festus, you loved of old;
Festus, you know, you must know!

Par. Festus! Where's
Aprile, then? Has he not chanted softly
The melodies I heard all night? I could not
Get to him for a cold hand on my breast,
But I made out his music well enough,
O well enough! If they have filled him full
With magical music, as they freight a star

With light, and have remitted all his sin,
They will forgive me too, I too shall know!

Fest. Festus, your Festus!

Par. Ask him if Aprile
Knows as he Loves—if I shall Love and Know?
I try; but that cold hand, like lead—so cold!

Fest. My hand, see!

Par. Ah, the curse, Aprile, Aprile!
We get so near—so very, very near!
'T is an old tale; Jove strikes the Titans down
Not when they set about their mountain-piling
But when another rock would crown the work.
And Phaeton—doubtless his first radiant plunge
Astonished mortals, though the gods were calm,
And Jove prepared his thunder: all old tales!

Fest. And what are these to you!

Par. Ay, fiends must laugh
So cruelly, so well; most like I never
Could tread a single pleasure underfoot,
But they were grinning by my side, were chuckling
To see me toil and drop away by flakes!
Hell-spawn! I am glad, most glad, that thus I fail!
Your cunning has o'ershot its aim. One year,
One month, perhaps, and I had served your turn!
You should have curbed your spite awhile. But now,
Who will believe 't was you that held me back?
Listen: there's shame and hissing and contempt,
And none but laughs who names me, none but spits
Measureless scorn upon me, me alone,
The quack, the cheat, the liar,—all on me!
And thus your famous plan to sink mankind
In silence and despair, by teaching them
One of their race had probed the inmost truth,

Had done all man could do, yet failed no less—
Your wise plan proves abortive. Men despair?
Ha, ha! why, they are hooting the empiric,
The ignorant and incapable fool who rushed
Madly upon a work beyond his wits;
Nor doubt they but the simplest of themselves
Could bring the matter to triumphant issue.
So, pick and choose among them all, accursed!
Try now, persuade some other to slave for you,
To ruin body and soul to work your ends!
No, no; I am the first and last, I think.

Fest. Dear friend, who are accursed? who has
done . . .

Par. What have I done? Fiends dare ask that? or
you,

Brave men? Oh, you can chime in boldly, backed
By the others! What had you to do, sage peers?
Here stand my rivals; Latin, Arab, Jew,
Greek, join dead hands against me: all I ask
Is, that the world enrol my name with theirs,
And even this poor privilege, it seems,
They range themselves, prepared to disallow.
Only observe: why, fiends may learn from them!
How they talk calmly of my throes, my fierce
Aspirings, terrible watchings, each one claiming
Its price of blood and brain; how they dissect
And sneeringly disparage the few truths
Got at a life's cost; they too hanging the while
About my neck, their lies misleading me
And their dead names browbeating me! Grey crew,
Yet steeped in fresh malevolence from hell,
Is there a reason for your hate? My truths
Have shaken a little the palm about each prince?

Just think, Aprile, all these leering dotards
Were bent on nothing less than to be crowned
As we! That yellow blear-eyed wretch in chief
To whom the rest cringe low with feigned respect,
Galen of Pergamos and hell—nay speak
The tale, old man! We met there face to face:
I said the crown should fall from thee. Once more
We meet as in that ghastly vestibule:
Look to my brow! Have I redeemed my pledge?

Fest. Peace, peace; ah, see!

Par. Oh, emptiness of fame!

Oh Persic Zoroaster, lord of stars!
—Who said these old renowns, dead long ago,
Could make me overlook the living world
To gaze through gloom at where they stood, indeed,
But stand no longer? What a warm light life
After the shade! In truth, my delicate witch,
My serpent-queen, you did but well to hide
The juggles I had else detected. Fire
May well run harmless o'er a breast like yours!
The cave was not so darkened by the smoke
But that your white limbs dazzled me: oh, white,
And panting as they twinkled, wildly dancing!
I cared not for your passionate gestures then,
But now I have forgotten the charm of charms,
The foolish knowledge which I came to seek,
While I remember that quaint dance; and thus
I am come back, not for those mummeries,
But to love you, and to kiss your little feet
Soft as an ermine's winter coat!

Fest.

A light

Will struggle through these thronging words at last,
As in the angry and tumultuous West

A soft star trembles through the drifting clouds.
 These are the strivings of a spirit which hates
 So sad a vault should coop it, and calls up
 The past to stand between it and its fate.
 Were he at Einsiedeln—or Michal here!

Par. Cruel! I seek her now—I kneel—I shriek—
 I clasp her vesture—but she fades, still fades;
 And she is gone; sweet human love is gone!
 'T is only when they spring to heaven that angels
 Reveal themselves to you; they sit all day
 Beside you, and lie down at night by you
 Who care not for their presence, muse or sleep,
 And all at once they leave you and you know them!
 We are so fooled, so cheated! Why, even now
 I am not too secure against foul play;
 The shadows deepen and the walls contract:
 No doubt some treachery is going on.
 'T is very dusk. Where are we put, Aprile?
 Have they left us in the lurch? This murky loath-
 some

Death-trap, this slaughter-house, is not the hall
 In the golden city! Keep by me, Aprile!
 There is a hand groping amid the blackness,
 To catch us. Have the spider-fingers got you,
 Poet? Hold on me for your life! If once
 They pull you!—Hold!

'T is but a dream—no more!
 I have you still; the sun comes out again;
 Let us be happy: all will yet go well!
 Let us confer: is it not like, Aprile,
 That spite of trouble, this ordeal passed,
 The value of my labours ascertained,
 Just as some stream foams long among the rocks

But after glideth glassy to the sea,
So, full content shall henceforth be my lot?
What think you, poet? Louder! Your clear voice
Vibrates too like a harp-string. Do you ask
How could I still remain on earth, should God
Grant me the great approval which I seek?
I, you, and God can comprehend each other,
But men would murmur, and with cause enough;
For when they saw me, stainless of all sin,
Preserved and sanctified by inward light,
They would complain that comfort, shut from them,
I drank thus unespied; that they live on,
Nor taste the quiet of a constant joy,
For ache and care and doubt and weariness,
While I am calm; help being vouchsafed to me,
And hid from them.—'T were best consider that!
You reason well, Aprile; but at least
Let me know this, and die! Is this too much?
I will learn this, if God so please, and die!
If thou shalt please, dear God, if thou shalt please!
We are so weak, we know our motives least
In their confused beginning. If at first
I sought . . . but wherefore bare my heart to thee!
I know thy mercy; and already thoughts
Flock fast about my soul to comfort it,
And intimate I cannot wholly fail,
For love and praise would clasp me willingly
Could I resolve to seek them. Thou art good,
And I should be content. Yet—yet first show
I have done wrong in daring! Rather give
The supernatural consciousness of strength
Which fed my youth! Only one hour of that
With thee to help—O what should bar me then!

Lost, lost! Thus things are ordered here! God's
creatures,

And yet he takes no pride in us!—none, none!
Truly there needs another life to come!
If this be all—(I must tell Festus that)
And other life await us not—for one,
I say 't is a poor cheat, a stupid bungle,
A wretched failure. I, for one, protest
Against it, and I hurl it back with scorn.

Well, onward though alone! Small time remains,
And much to do: I must have fruit, must reap
Some profit from my toils. I doubt my body
Will hardly serve me through; while I have laboured
It has decayed; and now that I demand
Its best assistance, it will crumble fast:
A sad thought, a sad fate! How very full
Of wormwood 't is, that just at altar-service,
The rapt hymn rising with the rolling smoke,
When glory dawns and all is at the best,
The sacred fire may flicker and grow faint
And die for want of a wood-piler's help!
Thus fades the flagging body, and the soul
Is pulled down in the overthrow. Well, well—
Let men catch every word, let them lose nought
Of what I say; something may yet be done.

They are ruins! Trust me who am one of you!
All ruins, glorious once, but lonely now.
It makes my heart sick to behold you crouch
Beside your desolate fane: the arches dim,
The crumbling columns grand against the moon,
Could I but rear them up once more—but that

May never be, so leave them! Trust me, friends,
Why should you linger here when I have built
A far resplendent temple, all your own?
Trust me, they are but ruins! See, Aprile,
Men will not heed! Yet were I not prepared
With better refuge for them, tongue of mine
Should ne'er reveal how blank their dwelling is:
I would sit down in silence with the rest.

Ha, what? you spit at me, you grin and shriek
Contempt into my ear—my ear which drank
God's accents once? you curse me? Why men, men,
I am not formed for it! Those hideous eyes
Will be before me sleeping, waking, praying,
They will not let me even die. Spare, spare me,
Sinning or no, forget that, only spare me
The horrible scorn! You thought I could support it,
But now you see what silly fragile creature
Cowers thus. I am not good nor bad enough,
Not Christ nor Cain, yet even Cain was saved
From hate like this. Let me but totter back!
Perhaps I shall elude those jeers which creep
Into my very brain, and shut these scorched
Eyelids and keep those mocking faces out.
Listen, Aprile! I am very calm:
Be not deceived, there is no passion here
Where the blood leaps like an imprisoned thing:
I am calm: I will exterminate the race!
Enough of that: 't is said and it shall be.
And now be merry: safe and sound am I
Who broke through their best ranks to get at you.
And such a havoc, such a rout, Aprile!

Fest. Have you no thought, no memory for me,

Aureole? I am so wretched—my pure Michal
Is gone, and you alone are left me now,
And even you forget me. Take my hand—
Lean on me thus. Do you not know me, Aureole?

Par. Festus, my own friend, you are come at last?
As you say, 't is an awful enterprise;
But you believe I shall go through with it:
'T is like you, and I thank you. Thank him for me,
Dear Michal! See how bright St. Saviour's spire
Flames in the sunset; all its figures quaint
Gay in the glancing light: you might conceive them
A troop of yellow-vested white-haired Jews
Bound for their own land where redemption dawns.

Fest. Not that blest time—not our youth's time,
dear God!

Par. Ha—stay! true, I forget—all is done since,
And he is come to judge me. How he speaks,
How calm, how well! yes, it is true, all true;
All quackery; all deceit; myself can laugh
The first at it, if you desire: but still
You know the obstacles which taught me tricks
So foreign to my nature—envy and hate,
Blind opposition, brutal prejudice,
Bald ignorance—what wonder if I sunk
To humour men the way they most approved?
My cheats were never palmed on such as you,
Dear Festus! I will kneel if you require me,
Impart the meagre knowledge I possess,
Explain its bounded nature, and avow
My insufficiency—whate'er you will:
I give the fight up: let there be an end,
A privacy, an obscure nook for me.
I want to be forgotten even by God.

But if that cannot be, dear Festus, lay me,
When I shall die, within some narrow grave,
Not by itself—for that would be too proud—
But where such graves are thickest; let it look
Nowise distinguished from the hillocks round,
So that the peasant at his brother's bed
May tread upon my own and know it not;
And we shall all be equal at the last,
Or classed according to life's natural ranks,
Fathers, sons, brothers, friends—not rich, nor wise,
Nor gifted: lay me thus, then say, "He lived
"Too much advanced before his brother men;
"They kept him still in front: 't was for their good
"But yet a dangerous station. It were strange
"That he should tell God he had never ranked
"With men: so, here at least he is a man."

Fest. That God shall take thee to his breast, dear
spirit,
Unto his breast, be sure! and here on earth
Shall splendour sit upon thy name for ever.
Sun! all the heaven is glad for thee: what care
If lower mountains light their snowy phares
At thine effulgence, yet acknowledge not
The source of day? Their theft shall be their bale:
For after-ages shall retrack thy beams,
And put aside the crowd of busy ones
And worship thee alone—the master-mind,
The thinker, the explorer, the creator!
Then, who should sneer at the convulsive throes
With which thy deeds were born, would scorn as well
The sheet of winding subterraneous fire
Which, pent and writhing, sends no less at last
Huge islands up amid the simmering sea.

Behold thy might in me! thou hast infused
Thy soul in mine; and I am grand as thou,
Seeing I comprehend thee—I so simple,
Thou so august. I recognize thee first;
I saw thee rise, I watched thee early and late,
And though no glance reveal thou dost accept
My homage—thus no less I proffer it,
And bid thee enter gloriously thy rest.

Par. Festus!

Fest. I am for noble Aureole, God!
I am upon his side, come weal or woe.
His portion shall be mine. He has done well.
I would have sinned, had I been strong enough,
As he has sinned. Reward him or I waive
Reward! If thou canst find no place for him,
He shall be king elsewhere, and I will be
His slave for ever. There are two of us.

Par. Dear Festus!

Fest. Here, dear Aureole! ever by you!

Par. Nay, speak on, or I dream again. Speak on!
Some story, anything—only your voice.
I shall dream else. Speak on! ay, leaning so!

Fest. Thus the Mayne glideth

Where my Love abideth.

Sleep's no softer: it proceeds

On through lawns, on through meads,

On and on, whate'er befall,

Meandering and musical,

Though the niggard pasturage

Bears not on its shaven ledge

Aught but weeds and waving grasses

To view the river as it passes,

Save here and there a scanty patch

Of primroses too faint to catch
A weary bee.

Par. More, more; say on!

Fest. And scarce it pushes
Its gentle way through strangling rushes
Where the glossy kingfisher
Flutters when noon-heats are near,
Glad the shelving banks to shun,
Red and steaming in the sun,
Where the shrew-mouse with pale throat
Burrows, and the speckled stoat;
Where the quick sandpipers flit
In and out the marl and grit
That seems to breed them, brown as they:
Nought disturbs its quiet way,
Save some lazy stork that springs,
Trailing it with legs and wings,
Whom the shy fox from the hill
Rouses, creep he ne'er so still.

Par. My heart! they loose my heart, those simple
words;

Its darkness passes, which nought else could touch:
Like some dark snake that force may not expel,
Which glideth out to music sweet and low.
What were you doing when your voice broke through
A chaos of ugly images? You, indeed!
Are you alone here?

Fest. All alone: you know me?
This cell?

Par. An unexceptionable vault:
Good brick and stone: the bats kept out, the rats
Kept in: a snug nook: how should I mistake it?

Fest. But wherefore am I here?

Par. Ah, well remembered!
 Why, for a purpose—for a purpose, Festus!
 'T is like me: here I trifle while time fleets,
 And this occasion, lost, will ne'er return.
 You are here to be instructed. I will tell
 God's message; but I have so much to say,
 I fear to leave half out. All is confused
 No doubt; but doubtless you will learn in time.
 He would not else have brought you here: no doubt
 I shall see clearer soon.

Fest. Tell me but this—
 You are not in despair?

Par. I? and for what?

Fest. Alas, alas! he knows not, as I feared!

Par. What is it you would ask me with that earnest
 Dear searching face?

Fest. How feel you, Aureole?

Par. Well:
 Well. 'T is a strange thing: I am dying, Festus,
 And now that fast the storm of life subsides,
 I first perceive how great the whirl has been.
 I was calm then, who am so dizzy now—
 Calm in the thick of the tempest, but no less
 A partner of its motion and mixed up
 With its career. The hurricane is spent,
 And the good boat speeds through the brightening
 weather;
 But is it earth or sea that heaves below?
 The gulf rolls like a meadow-swell, o'erstrewn
 With ravaged boughs and remnants of the shore;
 And now some islet, loosened from the land,
 Swims past with all its trees, sailing to ocean;
 And now the air is full of uptorn canes,

Light strippings from the fan-trees, tamarisks
Unrooted, with their birds still clinging to them,
All high in the wind. Even so my varied life
Drifts by me; I am young, old, happy, sad,
Hoping, desponding, acting, taking rest,
And all at once: that is, those past conditions
Float back at once on me. If I select
Some special epoch from the crowd, 't is but
To will, and straight the rest dissolve away,
And only that particular state is present
With all its long-forgotten circumstance
Distinct and vivid as at first—myself
A careless looker-on and nothing more,
Indifferent and amused, but nothing more.
And this is death: I understand it all.
New being waits me; new perceptions must
Be born in me before I plunge therein;
Which last is Death's affair; and while I speak,
Minute by minute he is filling me
With power; and while my foot is on the threshold
Of boundless life—the doors unopened yet,
All preparations not complete within—
I turn new knowledge upon old events,
And the effect is . . . but I must not tell;
It is not lawful. Your own turn will come
One day. Wait, Festus! You will die like me.

Fest. 'T is of that past life that I burn to hear.

Par. You wonder it engages me just now?
In truth, I wonder too. What's life to me?
Where'er I look is fire, where'er I listen
Music, and where I tend bliss evermore.
Yet how can I refrain? 'T is a refined
Delight to view those chances,—one last view.

I am so near the perils I escape,
That I must play with them and turn them over,
To feel how fully they are past and gone.
Still, it is like, some further cause exists
For this peculiar mood—some hidden purpose;
Did I not tell you something of it, Festus?
I had it fast, but it has somehow slipt
Away from me; it will return anon.

Fest. (Indeed his cheek seems young again, his voice
Complete with its old tones: that little laugh
Concluding every phrase, with upturned eye,
As though one stooped above his head to whom
He looked for confirmation and approval,
Where was it gone so long, so well preserved?
Then, the fore-finger pointing as he speaks,
Like one who traces in an open book
The matter he declares; 't is many a year
Since I remarked it last: and this in him,
But now a ghastly wreck!)

And can it be,
Dear Aureole, you have then found out at last
That worldly things are utter vanity?
That man is made for weakness, and should wait
In patient ignorance, till God appoint . . .

Par. Ha, the purpose: the true purpose: that is it!
How could I fail to apprehend! You here,
I thus! But no more trifling: I see all,
I know all: my last mission shall be done
If strength suffice. No trifling! Stay; this posture
Hardly befits one thus about to speak:
I will arise.

Fest. Nay, Aureole, are you wild?
You cannot leave your couch.

Par. No help; no help;
Not even your hand. So! there, I stand once more!
Speak from a couch? I never lectured thus.
My gown—the scarlet lined with fur; now put
The chain about my neck; my signet-ring
Is still upon my hand, I think—even so;
Last, my good sword; ah, trusty Azoth, leapest
Beneath thy master's grasp for the last time?
This couch shall be my throne: I bid these walls
Be consecrate, this wretched cell become
A shrine, for here God speaks to men through me.
Now, Festus, I am ready to begin.

Fest. I am dumb with wonder.

Par. Listen, therefore, Festus!
There will be time enough, but none to spare.
I must content myself with telling only
The most important points. You doubtless feel
That I am happy, Festus; very happy.

Fest. 'T is no delusion which uplifts him thus!
Then you are pardoned, Aureole, all your sin?

Par. Ay, pardoned: yet why pardoned?

Fest. 'T is God's praise
That man is bound to seek, and you . . .

Par. Have lived!
We have to live alone to set forth well
God's praise. 'T is true, I sinned much, as I thought,
And in effect need mercy, for I strove
To do that very thing; but, do your best
Or worst, praise rises, and will rise for ever.
Pardon from him, because of praise denied—
Who calls me to himself to exalt himself?
He might laugh as I laugh!

Fest. But all comes

To the same thing. 'T is fruitless for mankind
To fret themselves with what concerns them not;
They are no use that way: they should lie down
Content as God has made them, nor go mad
In thriveless cares to better what is ill.

Par. No, no; mistake me not; let me not work
More harm than I have worked! This is my case:
If I go joyous back to God, yet bring
No offering, if I render up my soul
Without the fruits it was ordained to bear,
If I appear the better to love God
For sin, as one who has no claim on him,—
Be not deceived! It may be surely thus
With me, while higher prizes still await
The mortal persevering to the end.
Beside I am not all so valueless:
I have been something, though too soon I left
Following the instincts of that happy time.

Fest. What happy time? For God's sake, for man's
sake,

What time was happy? All I hope to know
That answer will decide. What happy time?

Par. When but the time I vowed myself to man?

Fest. Great God, thy judgments are inscrutable!

Par. Yes, it was in me; I was born for it—
I, Paracelsus: it was mine by right.

Doubtless a searching and impetuous soul
Might learn from its own motions that some task
Like this awaited it about the world;
Might seek somewhere in this blank life of ours
For fit delights to stay its longings vast;
And, grappling Nature, so prevail on her
To fill the creature full she dared thus frame

Hungry for joy; and, bravely tyrannous,
Grow in demand, still craving more and more,
And make each joy conceded prove a pledge
Of other joy to follow—bating nought
Of its desires, still seizing fresh pretence
To turn the knowledge and the rapture wrung
As an extreme, last boon, from destiny,
Into occasion for new covetings,
New strifes, new triumphs:—doubtless a strong soul,
Alone, unaided might attain to this,
So glorious is our nature, so august
Man's inborn uninstructed impulses,
His naked spirit so majestic!
But this was born in me; I was made so;
Thus much time saved: the feverish appetites,
The tumult of unproved desire, the unaimed
Uncertain yearnings, aspirations blind,
Distrust, mistake, and all that ends in tears
Were saved me; thus I entered on my course.
You may be sure I was not all exempt
From human trouble; just so much of doubt
As bade me plant a surer foot upon
The sun-road, kept my eye unruined 'mid
The fierce and flashing splendour, set my heart
Trembling so much as warned me I stood there
On sufferance—not to idly gaze, but cast
Light on a darkling race; save for that doubt,
I stood at first where all aspire at last
To stand: the secret of the world was mine.
I knew, I felt, (perception unexpressed,
Uncomprehended by our narrow thought,
But somehow felt and known in every shift
And change in the spirit,—nay, in every pore

Of the body, even,)—what God is, what we are,
What life is—how God tastes an infinite joy
In infinite ways—one everlasting bliss,
From whom all being emanates, all power
Proceeds; in whom is life for evermore,
Yet whom existence in its lowest form
Includes; where dwells enjoyment there is he:
With still a flying point of bliss remote,
A happiness in store afar, a sphere
Of distant glory in full view; thus climbs
Pleasure its heights for ever and for ever.
The centre-fire heaves underneath the earth,
And the earth changes like a human face;
The molten ore bursts up among the rocks,
Winds into the stone's heart, outbranches bright
In hidden mines, spots barren river-beds,
Crumbles into fine sand where sunbeams bask—
God joys therein. The wroth sea's waves are edged
With foam, white as the bitten lip of hate,
When, in the solitary waste, strange groups
Of young volcanos come up, cyclops-like,
Staring together with their eyes on flame—
God tastes a pleasure in their uncouth pride.
Then all is still; earth is a wintry clod:
But spring-wind, like a dancing psaltress, passes
Over its breast to waken it, rare verdure
Buds tenderly upon rough banks, between
The withered tree-roots and the cracks of frost,
Like a smile striving with a wrinkled face;
The grass grows bright, the boughs are swoln with
 blossoms
Like chrysalids impatient for the air,
The shining dorrs are busy, beetles run

Along the furrows, ants make their ado;
Above, birds fly in merry flocks, the lark
Soars up and up, shivering for very joy;
Afar the ocean sleeps; white fishing-gulls
Flit where the strand is purple with its tribe
Of nested limpets; savage creatures seek
Their loves in wood and plain—and God renews
His ancient rapture. Thus he dwells in all,
From life's minute beginnings, up at last
To man—the consummation of this scheme
Of being, the completion of this sphere
Of life: whose attributes had here and there
Been scattered o'er the visible world before,
Asking to be combined, dim fragments meant
To be united in some wondrous whole,
Imperfect qualities throughout creation,
Suggesting some one creature yet to make,
Some point where all those scattered rays should meet
Convergent in the faculties of man.
Power—neither put forth blindly, nor controlled
Calmly by perfect knowledge; to be used
At risk, inspired or checked by hope and fear:
Knowledge—not intuition, but the slow
Uncertain fruit of an enhancing toil,
Strengthened by love: love—not serenely pure,
But strong from weakness, like a chance-sown plant
Which, cast on stubborn soil, puts forth changed buds
And softer stains, unknown in happier climes;
Love which endures and doubts and is oppressed
And cherished, suffering much and much sustained,
And blind, oft-failing, yet believing love,
A half-enlightened, often-chequered trust:—
Hints and previsions of which faculties,

Are strewn confusedly everywhere about
The inferior natures, and all lead up higher,
All shape out dimly the superior race,
The heir of hopes too fair to turn out false,
And man appears at last. So far the seal
Is put on life; one stage of being complete,
One scheme wound up: and from the grand result
A supplementary reflux of light,
Illustrates all the inferior grades, explains
Each back step in the circle. Not alone
For their possessor dawn those qualities,
But the new glory mixes with the heaven
And earth; man, once descried, imprints for ever
His presence on all lifeless things: the winds
Are henceforth voices, wailing or a shout,
A querulous mutter or a quick gay laugh,
Never a senseless gust now man is born.
The herded pines commune and have deep thoughts,
A secret they assemble to discuss
When the sun drops behind their trunks which glare
Like grates of hell: the peerless cup afloat
Of the lake-lily is an urn, some nymph
Swims bearing high above her head: no bird
Whistles unseen, but through the gaps above
That let light in upon the gloomy woods,
A shape peeps from the breezy forest-top,
Arch with small puckered mouth and mocking eye.
The morn has enterprise, deep quiet droops
With evening, triumph takes the sunset hour,
Voluptuous transport ripens with the corn
Beneath a warm moon like a happy face:
—And this to fill us with regard for man.
With apprehension of his passing worth,

Desire to work his proper nature out,
And ascertain his rank and final place,
For these things tend still upward, progress is
The law of life, man is not Man as yet.
Nor shall I deem his object served, his end
Attained, his genuine strength put fairly forth,
While only here and there a star dispels
The darkness, here and there a towering mind
O'erlooks its prostrate fellows: when the host
Is out at once to the despair of night,
When all mankind alike is perfected,
Equal in full-blown powers—then, not till then,
I say, begins man's general infancy.
For wherefore make account of feverish starts
Of restless members of a dormant whole,
Impatient nerves which quiver while the body
Slumbers as in a grave? Oh long ago
The brow was twitched, the tremulous lids astir,
The peaceful mouth disturbed; half-uttered speech
Ruffled the lip, and then the teeth were set,
The breath drawn sharp, the strong right-hand clenched
stronger,
As it would pluck a lion by the jaw;
The glorious creature laughed out even in sleep!
But when full roused, each giant-limb awake,
Each sinew strung, the great heart pulsing fast,
He shall start up and stand on his own earth,
Then shall his long triumphant march begin,
Thence shall his being date,—thus wholly roused,
What he achieves shall be set down to him.
When all the race is perfected alike
As man, that is; all tended to mankind,
And, man produced, all has its end thus far:

But in completed man begins anew
A tendency to God. Prognostics told
Man's near approach; so in man's self arise
August anticipations, symbols, types
Of a dim splendour ever on before
In that eternal circle life pursues.
For men begin to pass their nature's bound,
And find new hopes and cares which fast supplant
Their proper joys and griefs; they grow too great
For narrow creeds of right and wrong, which fade
Before the unmeasured thirst for good: while peace
Rises within them ever more and more.
Such men are even now upon the earth,
Serene amid the half-formed creatures round
Who should be saved by them and joined with them.
Such was my task, and I was born to it—
Free, as I said but now, from much that chains
Spirits, high-dowered but limited and vexed
By a divided and delusive aim,
A shadow mocking a reality
Whose truth avails not wholly to disperse
The flitting mimic called up by itself,
And so remains perplexed and nigh put out
By its fantastic fellow's wavering gleam.
I, from the first, was never cheated thus;
I never fashioned out a fancied good
Distinct from man's; a service to be done,
A glory to be ministered unto
With powers put forth at man's expense, withdrawn
From labouring in his behalf; a strength
Denied that might avail him. I cared not
Lest his success ran counter to success
Elsewhere: for God is glorified in man,

And to man's glory vowed I soul and limb.
Yet, constituted thus, and thus endowed,
I failed: I gazed on power till I grew blind.
Power; I could not take my eyes from that:
That only, I thought, should be preserved, increased
At any risk, displayed, struck out at once—
The sign and note and character of man.
I saw no use in the past: only a scene
Of degradation, ugliness and tears,
The record of disgraces best forgotten,
A sullen page in human chronicles
Fit to erase. I saw no cause why man
Should not stand all-sufficient even now,
Or why his annals should be forced to tell
That once the tide of light, about to break
Upon the world, was sealed within its spring:
I would have had one day, one moment's space,
Change man's condition, push each slumbering claim
Of mastery o'er the elemental world
At once to full maturity, then roll
Oblivion o'er the work, and hide from man
What night had ushered morn. Not so, dear child
Of after-days, wilt thou reject the past
Big with deep warnings of the proper tenure
By which thou hast the earth: for thee the present
Shall have distinct and trembling beauty, seen
Beside that past's own shade whence, in relief,
Its brightness shall stand out: nor yet on thee
Shall burst the future, as successive zones
Of several wonder open on some spirit
Flying secure and glad from heaven to heaven:
But thou shalt painfully attain to joy,
While hope and fear and love shall keep thee man!

All this was hid from me: as one by one
My dreams grew dim, my wide aims circumscribed,
As actual good within my reach decreased,
While obstacles sprung up this way and that
To keep me from effecting half the sum,
Small as it proved; as objects, mean within
The primal aggregate, seemed, even the least,
Itself a match for my concentrated strength—
What wonder if I saw no way to shun
Despair? The power I sought for man, seemed God's.
In this conjuncture, as I prayed to die,
A strange adventure made me know, one sin
Had spotted my career from its uprise;
I saw Aprile—my Aprile there!
And as the poor melodious wretch disburthened
His heart, and moaned his weakness in my ear,
I learned my own deep error; love's undoing
Taught me the worth of love in man's estate,
And what proportion love should hold with power
In his right constitution; love preceding
Power, and with much power, always much more love;
Love still too straitened in his present means,
And earnest for new power to set love free.
I learned this, and supposed the whole was learned:
And thus, when men received with stupid wonder
My first revealings, would have worshipped me,
And I despised and loathed their proffered praise—
When, with awakened eyes, they took revenge
For past credulity in casting shame
On my real knowledge, and I hated them—
It was not strange I saw no good in man,
To overbalance all the wear and waste
Of faculties, displayed in vain, but born

To prosper in some better sphere: and why?
In my own heart love had not been made wise
To trace love's faint beginnings in mankind,
To know even hate is but a mask of love's,
To see a good in evil, and a hope
In ill-success; to sympathize, be proud
Of their half-reasons, faint aspirings, dim
Struggles for truth, their poorest fallacies,
Their prejudice and fears and cares and doubts;
All with a touch of nobleness, despite
Their error, upward tending all though weak,
Like plants in mines which never saw the sun,
But dream of him, and guess where he may be,
And do their best to climb and get to him.
All this I knew not, and I failed. Let men
Regard me, and the poet dead long ago
Who loved too rashly; and shape forth a third
And better-tempered spirit, warned by both:
As from the over-radiant star too mad
To drink the life-springs, beamless thence itself—
And the dark orb which borders the abyss,
Ingulfed in icy night,—might have its course
A temperate and equidistant world.
Meanwhile, I have done well, though not all well.
As yet men cannot do without contempt;
'T is for their good, and therefore fit awhile
That they reject the weak, and scorn the false,
Rather than praise the strong and true, in me:
But after, they will know me. If I stoop
Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
It is but for a time; I press God's lamp
Close to my breast; its splendour, soon or late,
Will pierce the gloom: I shall emerge one day.

You understand me? I have said enough?

Fest. Now die, dear Aureole!

Par. Festus, let my hand—

This hand, lie in your own, my own true friend!

Aprile! Hand in hand with you, Aprile!

Fest. And this was Paracelsus!

ROMANCES.

ROMANES.

ROMANCES.

HOLY-CROSS DAY.

ON WHICH THE JEWS WERE FORCED TO ATTEND AN ANNUAL
CHRISTIAN SERMON IN ROME.

[“Now was come about Holy-Cross Day, and now must my lord preach his first sermon to the Jews: as it was of old cared for in the merciful bowels of the Church, that, so to speak, a crumb at least from her conspicuous table here in Rome, should be, though but once yearly, cast to the famishing dogs, under-trampled and bespitten-upon beneath the feet of the guests. And a moving sight in truth, this, of so many of the besotted blind restif and ready-to-perish Hebrews! now maternally brought—nay, (for He saith, ‘Compel them to come in’) haled, as it were, by the head and hair, and against their obstinate hearts, to partake of the heavenly grace. What awakening, what striving with tears, what working of a yeasty conscience! Nor was my lord wanting to himself on so apt an occasion; witness the abundance of conversions which did incontinently reward him: though not to my lord be altogether the glory.”—*Diary by the Bishop's Secretary, 1600.*]

What the Jews really said, on thus being driven to church, was rather to this effect:—

I.

FEE, faw, fum! bubble and squeak!
Blessedest Thursday 's the fat of the week.

Rumble and tumble, sleek and rough,
Stinking and savoury, smug and gruff,
Take the church-road, for the bell's due chime
Gives us the summons—'t is sermon-time!

II.

Boh, here's Barnabas! Job, that's you?
Up stumps Solomon—bustling too?
Shame, man! greedy beyond your years
To handsel the bishop's shaving-shears?
Fair play 's a jewel! Leave friends in the lurch?
Stand on a line ere you start for the church!

III.

Higgledy piggledy, packed we lie,
Rats in a hamper, swine in a sty,
Wasps in a bottle, frogs in a sieve,
Worms in a carcase, fleas in a sleeve.
Hist! square shoulders, settle your thumbs
And buzz for the bishop—here he comes.

IV.

Bow, wow, wow—a bone for the dog!
I liken his Grace to an acorned hog.
What, a boy at his side, with the bloom of a lass,
To help and handle my lord's hour-glass!
Didst ever behold so lithe a chine?
His cheek hath laps like a fresh-singed swine.

V.

Aaron 's asleep—shove hip to haunch,
Or somebody deal him a dig in the paunch!

Look at the purse with the tassel and knob,
And the gown with the angel and thingumbob!
What's he at, quotha? reading his text!
Now you've his curtsey—and what comes next?

VI.

See to our converts—you doomed black dozen—
No stealing away—nor cog nor cozen!
You five, that were thieves, deserve it fairly;
You seven, that were beggars, will live less sparely;
You took your turn and dipped in the hat,
Got fortune—and fortune gets you; mind that!

VII.

Give your first groan—compunction 's at work;
And soft! from a Jew you mount to a Turk.
Lo, Micah,—the selfsame beard on chin
He was four times already converted in!
Here's a knife, clip quick— it's a sign of grace—
Or he ruins us all with his hanging-face.

VIII.

Whom now is the bishop a-leering at?
I know a point where his text falls pat.
I'll tell him to-morrow, a word just now
Went to my heart and made me vow
I meddle no more with the worst of trades—
Let somebody else pay his serenades.

IX.

Groan all together now, whee—hee—hee!
It's a-work, it's a-work, ah, woe is me!

It began, when a herd of us, picked and placed,
Were spurred through the Corso, stripped to the waist;
Jew brutes, with sweat and blood well spent
To usher in worthily Christian Lent.

X.

It grew, when the hangman entered our bounds,
Yelled, pricked us out to his church like hounds:
It got to a pitch, when the hand indeed
Which gutted my purse, would throttle my creed:
And it overflows, when, to even the odd,
Men I helped to their sins, help me to their God.

XI.

But now, while the scapegoats leave our flock,
And the rest sit silent and count the clock,
Since forced to muse the appointed time
On these precious facts and truths sublime,—
Let us fitly employ it, under our breath,
In saying Ben Ezra's Song of Death.

XII.

For Rabbi Ben Ezra, the night he died,
Called sons and sons' sons to his side,
And spoke, "This world has been harsh and strange;
"Something is wrong: there needeth a change.
"But what, or where? at the last or first?
"In one point only we sinned, at worst.

XIII.

"The Lord will have mercy on Jacob yet,
"And again in his border see Israel set.

"When Judah beholds Jerusalem,
"The stranger-seed shall be joined to them:
"To Jacob's House shall the Gentiles cleave.
"So the Prophet saith and his sons believe.

XIV.

"Ay, the children of the chosen race
"Shall carry and bring them to their place:
"In the land of the Lord shall lead the same,
"Bondsmen and handmaids. Who shall blame,
"When the slaves enslave, the oppressed ones o'er
"The oppressor triumph for evermore?

XV.

"God spoke, and gave us the word to keep:
"Bade never fold the hands nor sleep
"Mid a faithless world,—at watch and ward,
"Till Christ at the end relieve our guard.
"By his servant Moses the watch was set:
"Though near upon cock-crow, we keep it yet.

XVI.

"Thou! if thou wast he, who at mid-watch came,
"By the starlight, naming a dubious name!
"And if, too heavy with sleep—too rash
"With fear—O thou, if that martyr-gash
"Fell on thee coming to take thine own,
"And we gave the Cross, when we owed the Throne—

XVII.

"Thou art the Judge. We are bruised thus.
"But, the Judgment over, join sides with us!

"Thine too is the cause! and not more thine
"Than ours, is the work of these dogs and swine,
"Whose life laughs through and spits at their creed,
"Who maintain thee in word, and defy thee in deed!

XVIII.

"We withstood Christ then? Be mindful how
"At least we withstand Barabbas now!
"Was our outrage sore? But the worst we spared,
"To have called these—Christians, had we dared!
"Let defiance to them pay mistrust of thee,
"And Rome make amends for Calvary!

XIX.

"By the torture, prolonged from age to age,
"By the infamy, Israel's heritage,
"By the Ghetto's plague, by the garb's disgrace,
"By the badge of shame, by the felon's place,
"By the branding-tool, the bloody whip,
"And the summons to Christian fellowship,—

XX.

"We boast our proof that at least the Jew
"Would wrest Christ's name from the Devil's crew.
"Thy face took never so deep a shade
"But we fought them in it, God our aid!
"A trophy to bear, as we march, thy band
"South, East, and on to the Pleasant Land!"

[*The present Pope abolished this bad business of the
Sermon.—R. B.*]

PROTUS.

AMONG these latter busts we count by scores,
Half-emperors and quarter-emperors,
Each with his bay-leaf fillet, loose-thonged vest,
Loric and low-browed Gorgon on the breast,—
One loves a baby face, with violets there,
Violets instead of laurel in the hair,
As those were all the little locks could bear.

Now read here. "Protus ends a period
"Of empery beginning with a god;
"Born in the porphyry chamber at Byzant,
"Queens by his cradle, proud and ministrant:
"And if he quickened breath there, 't would like fire
"Pantingly through the dim vast realm transpire.
"A fame that he was missing, spread afar:
"The world, from its four corners, rose in war,
"Till he was borne out on a balcony
"To pacify the world when it should see.
"Of captains ranged before him, one, his hand
"Made baby points at, gained the chief command.
"And day by day more beautiful he grew
"In shape, all said, in feature and in hue,
"While young Greek sculptors gazing on the child
"Became, with old Greek sculpture, reconciled.
"Already sages laboured to condense
"In easy tones a life's experience:
"And artists took grave counsel to impart
"In one breath and one hand-sweep, all their art—

"To make his graces prompt as blossoming
 "Of plentifully-watered palms in spring:
 "Since well beseems it, whoso mounts the throne,
 "For beauty, knowledge, strength, should stand alone,
 "And mortals love the letters of his name."

—Stop! Have you turned two pages? Still the same.
 New reign, same date. The scribe goes on to say
 How that same year, on such a month and day,
 "John the Pannonian, groundedly believed
 "A blacksmith's bastard, whose hard hand reprieved
 "The Empire from its fate the year before,—
 "Came, had a mind to take the crown, and wore
 "The same for six years, (during which the Huns
 "Kept off their fingers from us) till his sons
 "Put something in his liquor"—and so forth.
 Then a new reign. Stay—"Take at its just worth"
 (Subjoins an annotator) "What I give
 "As hearsay. Some think, John let Protus live
 "And slip away. 'T is said, he reached man's age
 "At some blind northern court; made, first a page,
 "Then tutor to the children; last, of use
 "About the hunting-stables. I deduce
 "He wrote the little tract 'On worming dogs,'
 "Whereof the name in sundry catalogues
 "Is extant yet. A Protus of the race
 "Is rumoured to have died a monk in Thrace,—
 "And, if the same, he reached senility."

Here's John the Smith's rough-hammered head. Great
 eye,
 Gross jaw and griped lips do what granite can
 To give you the crown-grasper. What a man!

THE STATUE AND THE BUST.

THERE'S a palace in Florence, the world knows well,
And a statue watches it from the square,
And this story of both do our townsmen tell.

Ages ago, a lady there,
At the farthest window facing the East
Asked, "Who rides by with the royal air?"

The bridesmaids' prattle around her ceased;
She leaned forth, one on either hand;
They saw how the blush of the bride increased—

They felt by its beats her heart expand—
As one at each ear and both in a breath
Whispered, "The Great-Duke Ferdinand."

That self-same instant, underneath,
The Duke rode past in his idle way,
Empty and fine like a swordless sheath.

Gay he rode, with a friend as gay,
Till he threw his head back—"Who is she?"
—"A bride the Riccardi brings home to-day."

Hair in heaps lay heavily
Over a pale brow spirit-pure—
Carved like the heart of the coal-black tree,

Crisped like a war-steed's encolure—
And vainly sought to dissemble her eyes
Of the blackest black our eyes endure.

And lo, a blade for a knight's emprise
Filled the fine empty sheath of a man,—
The Duke grew straightway brave and wise.

He looked at her, as a lover can;
She looked at him, as one who awakes:
The past was a sleep, and her life began.

Now, love so ordered for both their sakes,
A feast was held that selfsame night
In the pile which the mighty shadow makes.

(For Via Larga is three-parts light,
But the palace overshadows one,
Because of a crime which may God requite!

To Florence and God the wrong was done,
Through the first republic's murder there
By Cosimo and his cursed son.)

The Duke (with the statue's face in the square)
Turned in the midst of his multitude
At the bright approach of the bridal pair.

Face to face the lovers stood
A single minute and no more,
While the bridegroom bent as a man subdued—

Bowed till his bonnet brushed the floor—
For the Duke on the lady a kiss conferred,
As the courtly custom was of yore.

In a minute can lovers exchange a word?
If a word did pass, which I do not think,
Only one out of the thousand heard.

That was the bridegroom. At day's brink
He and his bride were alone at last
In a bed-chamber by a taper's blink.

Calmly he said that her lot was cast,
That the door she had passed was shut on her
Till the final catafalk repassed.

The world meanwhile, its noise and stir,
Through a certain window facing the East
She could watch like a convent's chronicler.

Since passing the door might lead to a feast,
And a feast might lead to so much beside,
He, of many evils, chose the least.

"Freely I choose too," said the bride:
"Your window and its world suffice,"
Replied the tongue, while the heart replied—

"If I spend the night with that devil twice,
"May his window serve as my loop of hell
"Whence a damned soul looks on paradise!

"I fly to the Duke who loves me well,
"Sit by his side and laugh at sorrow
"Ere I count another ave-bell.

"'T is only the coat of a page to borrow,
"And tie my hair in a horse-boy's trim,
"And I save my soul—but not to-morrow."—

(She checked herself and her eye grew dim)
"My father tarries to bless my state:
"I must keep it one day more for him.

"Is one day more so long to wait?
"Moreover the Duke rides past, I know;
"We shall see each other, sure as fate."

She turned on her side and slept. Just so!
So we resolve on a thing and sleep:
So did the lady, ages ago.

That night the Duke said, "Dear or cheap
"As the cost of this cup of bliss may prove
"To body or soul, I will drain it deep."

And on the morrow, bold with love,
He beckoned the bridegroom (close on call,
As his duty bade, by the Duke's alcove)

And smiled "'Twas a very funeral,
"Your lady will think, this feast of ours,—
"A shame to efface, whate'er befall!

"What if we break from the Arno bowers,
"And try if Petraja, cool and green,
"Cure last night's fault with this morning's flowers?"

The bridegroom, not a thought to be seen
On his steady brow and quiet mouth,
Said, "Too much favour for me so mean!

"But, alas! my lady leaves the South;
"Each wind that comes from the Apennine
"Is a menace to her tender youth:

"Nor a way exists, the wise opine,
"If she quits her palace twice this year,
"To avert the flower of life's decline."

Quoth the Duke, "A sage and a kindly fear.
"Moreover Petraja is cold this spring:
"Be our feast to-night as usual here!"

And then to himself—"Which night shall bring
"Thy bride to her lover's embraces, fool—
"Or I am the fool, and thou art the king!

"Yet my passion must wait a night, nor cool—
"For to-night the Envoy arrives from France
"Whose heart I unlock with thyself, my tool.

"I need thee still and might miss perchance.

"To-day is not wholly lost, beside,

"With its hope of my lady's countenance:

"For I ride—what should I do but ride?

"And passing her palace, if I list,

"May glance at its window—well betide!"

So said, so done: nor the lady missed

One ray that broke from the ardent brow,

Nor a curl of the lips where the spirit kissed.

Be sure that each renewed the vow,

No morrow's sun should arise and set

And leave them then as it left them now.

But next day passed, and next day yet,

With still fresh cause to wait one day more

Ere each leaped over the parapet.

And still, as love's brief morning wore,

With a gentle start, half smile, half sigh,

They found love not as it seemed before.

They thought it would work infallibly,

But not in despite of heaven and earth:

The rose would blow when the storm passed by.

Meantime they could profit in winter's dearth

By store of fruits that supplant the rose:

The world and its ways have a certain worth:

And to press a point while these oppose
Were simple policy; better wait:
We lose no friends and we gain no foes.

Meantime, worse fates than a lover's fate,
Who daily may ride and pass and look
Where his lady watches behind the grate!

And she—she watched the square like a book
Holding one picture and only one,
Which daily to find she undertook:

When the picture was reached the book was done,
And she turned from the picture at night to scheme
Of tearing it out for herself next sun.

So weeks grew months, years; gleam by gleam
The glory dropped from their youth and love,
And both perceived they had dreamed a dream;

Which hovered as dreams do, still above:
But who can take a dream for a truth?
Oh, hide our eyes from the next remove!

One day as the lady saw her youth
Depart, and the silver thread that streaked
Her hair, and, worn by the serpent's tooth,

The brow so puckered, the chin so peaked,—
And wondered who the woman was,
Hollow-eyed and haggard-cheeked,

Fronting her silent in the glass—
“Summon here,” she suddenly said,
“Before the rest of my old self pass,

“Him, the Carver, a hand to aid,
“Who fashions the clay no love will change,
“And fixes a beauty never to fade.

“Let Robbia’s craft so apt and strange
“Arrest the remains of young and fair,
“And rivet them while the seasons range.

“Make me a face on the window there,
“Waiting as ever, mute the while,
“My love to pass below in the square!

“And let me think that it may beguile
“Dreary days which the dead must spend
“Down in their darkness under the aisle,

“To say, ‘What matters it at the end?
“‘I did no more while my heart was warm
“‘Than does that image, my pale-faced friend.’

“Where is the use of the lip’s red charm,
“The heaven of hair, the pride of the brow,
“And the blood that blues the inside arm—

“Unless we turn, as the soul knows how,
“The earthly gift to an end divine?
“A lady of clay is as good, I trow.”

But long ere Robbia's cornice, fine
With flowers and fruits which leaves enlace,
Was set where now is the empty shrine—

(And, leaning out of a bright blue space,
As a ghost might lean from a chink of sky,
The passionate pale lady's face—

Eyeing ever, with earnest eye
And quick-turned neck at its breathless stretch,
Some one who ever is passing by—)

The Duke had sighed like the simplest wretch
In Florence, "Youth—my dream escapes!
"Will its record stay?" And he bade them fetch

Some subtle moulder of brazen shapes—
"Can the soul, the will, die out of a man
"Ere his body find the grave that gapes?

"John of Douay shall effect my plan,
"Set me on horseback here aloft,
"Alive, as the crafty sculptor can,

"In the very square I have crossed so oft:
"That men may admire, when future suns
"Shall touch the eyes to a purpose soft,

"While the mouth and the brow stay brave in bronze—
"Admire and say, 'When he was alive
"How he would take his pleasure once!'

“And it shall go hard but I contrive
“To listen the while, and laugh in my tomb
“At idleness which aspires to strive.”

So! While these wait the trump of doom,
How do their spirits pass, I wonder,
Nights and days in the narrow room?

Still, I suppose, they sit and ponder
What a gift life was, ages ago,
Six steps out of the chapel yonder.

Only they see not God, I know,
Nor all that chivalry of his,
The soldier-saints who, row on row,

Burn upward each to his point of bliss—
Since, the end of life being manifest,
He had burned his way thro’ the world to this.

I hear you reproach, “But delay was best,
“For their end was a crime.”—Oh, a crime will do
As well, I reply, to serve for a test,

As a virtue golden through and through,
Sufficient to vindicate itself
And prove its worth at a moment’s view!

Must a game be played for the sake of pelf?
Where a button goes, 't were an epigram
To offer the stamp of the very Guelph.

The true has no value beyond the sham:
As well the counter as coin, I submit,
When your table's a hat, and your prize, a dram.

Stake your counter as boldly every whit,
Venture as warily, use the same skill,
Do your best, whether winning or losing it,

If you choose to play!—is my principle.
Let a man contend to the uttermost
For his life's set prize, be it what it will!

The counter our lovers staked was lost
As surely as if it were lawful coin:
And the sin I impute to each frustrate ghost

Is, the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,
Though the end in sight was a vice, I say.
You of the virtue (we issue join)
How strive you? *De te, fabula!*

PORPHYRIA'S LOVER.

THE rain set early in to-night,
The sullen wind was soon awake,
It tore the elm-tops down for spite,
And did its worst to vex the lake,
I listened with heart fit to break.
When glided in Porphyria; straight
She shut the cold out and the storm,
And kneeled and made the cheerless grate
Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;
Which done, she rose, and from her form
Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,
And laid her soiled gloves by, untied
Her hat and let the damp hair fall,
And, last, she sat down by my side
And called me. When no voice replied,
She put my arm about her waist,
And made her smooth white shoulder bare,
And all her yellow hair displaced,
And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,
And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair,
Murmuring how she loved me—she
Too weak, for all her heart's endeavour,
To set its struggling passion free
From pride, and vainer ties dissever,
And give herself to me for ever.
But passion sometimes would prevail,
Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain

A sudden thought of one so pale
For love of her, and all in vain:
So, she was come through wind and rain.
Be sure I looked up at her eyes
Happy and proud; at last I knew
Porphyria worshipped me; surprise
Made my heart swell, and still it grew
While I debated what to do.
That moment she was mine, mine, fair,
Perfectly pure and good: I found
A thing to do, and all her hair
In one long yellow string I wound
Three times her little throat around,
And strangled her. No pain felt she;
I am quite sure she felt no pain.
As a shut bud that holds a bee,
I warily oped her lids: again
Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.
And I untightened next the tress
About her neck; her cheek once more
Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss:
I propped her head up as before,
Only, this time my shoulder bore
Her head, which droops upon it still:
The smiling rosy little head,
So glad it has its utmost will,
That all it scorned at once is fled,
And I, its love, am gained instead!
Porphyria's love: she guessed not how
Her darling one wish would be heard.
And thus we sit together now,
And all night long we have not stirred,
And yet God has not said a word!

“CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK
TOWER CAME.”

(See Edgar's song in “LEAR.”)

I.

My first thought was, he lied in every word,
That hoary cripple, with malicious eye
Askance to watch the working of his lie
On mine, and mouth scarce able to afford
Suppression of the glee, that pursed and scored
Its edge, at one more victim gained thereby.

II.

What else should he be set for, with his staff?
What, save to waylay with his lies, ensnare
All travellers who might find him posted there,
And ask the road? I guessed what skull-like laugh
Would break, what crutch 'gin write my epitaph
For pastime in the dusty thoroughfare,

III.

If at his counsel I should turn aside
Into that ominous tract which, all agree,
Hides the Dark Tower. Yet acquiescingly
I did turn as he pointed: neither pride
Nor hope rekindling at the end descried,
So much as gladness that some end might be.

IV.

For, what with my whole world-wide wandering,
What with my search drawn out thro' years, my hope
Dwindled into a ghost not fit to cope
With that obstreperous joy success would bring,—
I hardly tried now to rebuke the spring
My heart made, finding failure in its scope.

V.

As when a sick man very near to death
Seems dead indeed, and feels begin and end
The tears and takes the farewell of each friend,
And hears one bid the other go, draw breath
Freelier outside, ("since all is o'er," he saith,
"And the blow fallen no grieving can amend;")

VI.

While some discuss if near the other graves
Be room enough for this, and when a day
Suits best for carrying the corpse away,
With care about the banners, scarves and staves:
And still the man hears all, and only craves
He may not shame such tender love and stay.

VII.

Thus, I had so long suffered in this quest,
Heard failure prophesied so oft, been writ
So many times among "The Band"—to wit,
The knights who to the Dark Tower's search addressed
Their steps—that just to fail as they, seemed best,
And all the doubt was now—should I be fit?

VIII.

So, quiet as despair, I turned from him,
That hateful cripple, out of his highway
Into the path he pointed. All the day
Had been a dreary one at best, and dim
Was settling to its close, yet shot one grim
Red leer to see the plain catch its estray.

IX.

For mark! no sooner was I fairly found
Pledged to the plain, after a pace or two,
Than, pausing to throw backward a last view
O'er the safe road, 't was gone; grey plain all round:
Nothing but plain to the horizon's bound.
I might go on; nought else remained to do.

X.

So, on I went. I think I never saw
Such starved ignoble nature; nothing throve:
For flowers—as well expect a cedar grove!
But cockle, spurge, according to their law
Might propagate their kind, with none to awe,
You'd think; a burr had been a treasure trove.

XI.

No! penury, inertness and grimace,
In some strange sort, were the land's portion. "See
"Or shut your eyes," said Nature peevishly,
"It nothing skills: I cannot help my case:
"'T is the Last Judgment's fire must cure this place,
"Calcine its clods and set my prisoners free."

XII.

If there pushed any ragged thistle-stalk
Above its mates, the head was chopped; the bents
Were jealous else. What made those holes and rents
In the dock's harsh swarth leaves, bruised as to baulk
All hope of greenness? 't is a brute must walk
Pashing their life out, with a brute's intents.

XIII.

As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair
In leprosy; thin dry blades pricked the mud
Which underneath looked kneaded up with blood.
One stiff blind horse, his every bone a-stare,
Stood stupefied, however he came there:
Thrust out past service from the devil's stud!

XIV.

Alive? he might be dead for aught I know,
With that red gaunt and colloped neck a-strain,
And shut eyes underneath the rusty mane;
Seldom went such grotesqueness with such woe;
I never saw a brute I hated so;
He must be wicked to deserve such pain.

XV.

I shut my eyes and turned them on my heart.
As a man calls for wine before he fights,
I asked one draught of earlier, happier sights,
Ere fitly I could hope to play my part.
Think first, fight afterwards—the soldier's art:
One taste of the old time sets all to rights.

XVI.

Not it! I fancied Cuthbert's reddening face
Beneath its garniture of curly gold,
Dear fellow, till I almost felt him fold
An arm in mine to fix me to the place,
That way he used. Alas, one night's disgrace!
Out went my heart's new fire and left it cold.

XVII.

Giles then, the soul of honour—there he stands
Frank as ten years ago when knighted first.
What honest man should dare (he said) he durst.
Good—but the scene shifts—faugh! what hangman
hands
Pin to his breast a parchment? His own bands
Read it. Poor traitor, spit upon and curst!

XVIII.

Better this present than a past like that;
Back therefore to my darkening path again!
No sound, no sight as far as eye could strain.
“Will the night send a howlet or a bat?”
I asked: when something on the dismal flat
Came to arrest my thoughts and change their train.

XIX.

A sudden little river crossed my path
As unexpected as a serpent comes.
No sluggish tide congenial to the glooms;
This, as it frothed by, might have been a bath
For the fiend's glowing hoof—to see the wrath
Of its black eddy bespate with flakes and spumes.

XX.

So petty yet so spiteful! All along,
Low scrubby alders kneeled down over it;
Drenched willows flung them headlong in a fit
Of mute despair, a suicidal throng:
The river which had done them all the wrong,
Whate'er that was, rolled by, deterred no whit.

XXI.

Which, while I forded,—good saints, how I feared
To set my foot upon a dead man's cheek,
Each step, or feel the spear I thrust to seek
For hollows, tangled in his hair or beard!
—It may have been a water-rat I speared,
But, ugh! it sounded like a baby's shriek.

XXII.

Glad was I when I reached the other bank.
Now for a better country. Vain presage!
Who were the strugglers, what war did they wage
Whose savage trample thus could pad the dank
Soil to a splash? Toads in a poisoned tank,
Or wild cats in a red-hot iron cage—

XXIII.

The fight must so have seemed in that fell cirque.
What penned them there, with all the plain to choose?
No foot-print leading to that horrid mews,
None out of it. Mad brewage set to work
Their brains, no doubt, like galley-slaves the Turk
Pits for his pastime, Christians against Jews.

XXIV.

And more than that—a furlong on—why, there!
What bad use was that engine for, that wheel,
Or brake, not wheel—that harrow fit to reel
Men's bodies out like silk? with all the air
Of Tophet's tool, on earth left unaware,
Or brought to sharpen its rusty teeth of steel.

XXV.

Then came a bit of stubbed ground, once a wood,
Next a marsh, it would seem, and now mere earth
Desperate and done with; (so a fool finds mirth,
Makes a thing and then mars it, till his mood
Changes and off he goes!) within a rood—
Bog, clay and rubble, sand and stark black dearth.

XXVI.

Now blotches rankling, coloured gay and grim,
Now patches where some leanness of the soil's
Broke into moss or substances like boils;
Then came some palsied oak, a cleft in him
Like a distorted mouth that splits its rim
Gaping at death, and dies while it recoils.

XXVII.

And just as far as ever from the end!
Nought in the distance but the evening, nought
To point my footstep further! At the thought,
A great black bird, Apollyon's bosom-friend,
Sailed past, nor beat his wide wing dragon-penned
That brushed my cap—perchance the guide I sought.

XXVIII.

For, looking up, aware I somehow grew,
'Spite of the dusk, the plain had given place
All round to mountains—with such name to grace
Mere ugly heights and heaps now stolen in view.
How thus they had surprised me,—solve it, you!
How to get from them was no clearer case.

XXIX.

Yet half I seemed to recognise some trick
Of mischief happened to me, God knows when—
In a bad dream perhaps. Here ended, then,
Progress this way. When, in the very nick
Of giving up, one time more, came a click
As when a trap shuts—you're inside the den!

XXX.

Burningly it came on me all at once,
This was the place! those two hills on the right,
Crouched like two bulls locked horn in horn in fight;
While to the left, a tall scalped mountain . . . Duncce,
Dotard, a-dozing at the very nonce,
After a life spent training for the sight!

XXXI.

What in the midst lay but the Tower itself?
The round squat turret, blind as the fool's heart,
Built of brown stone, without a counterpart
In the whole world. The tempest's mocking elf
Points to the shipman thus the unseen shelf
He strikes on, only when the timbers start.

XXXII.

Not see? because of night perhaps?—why, day
Came back again for that! before it left,
The dying sunset kindled through a cleft:
The hills, like giants at a hunting, lay,
Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay,—
“Now stab and end the creature—to the heft!”

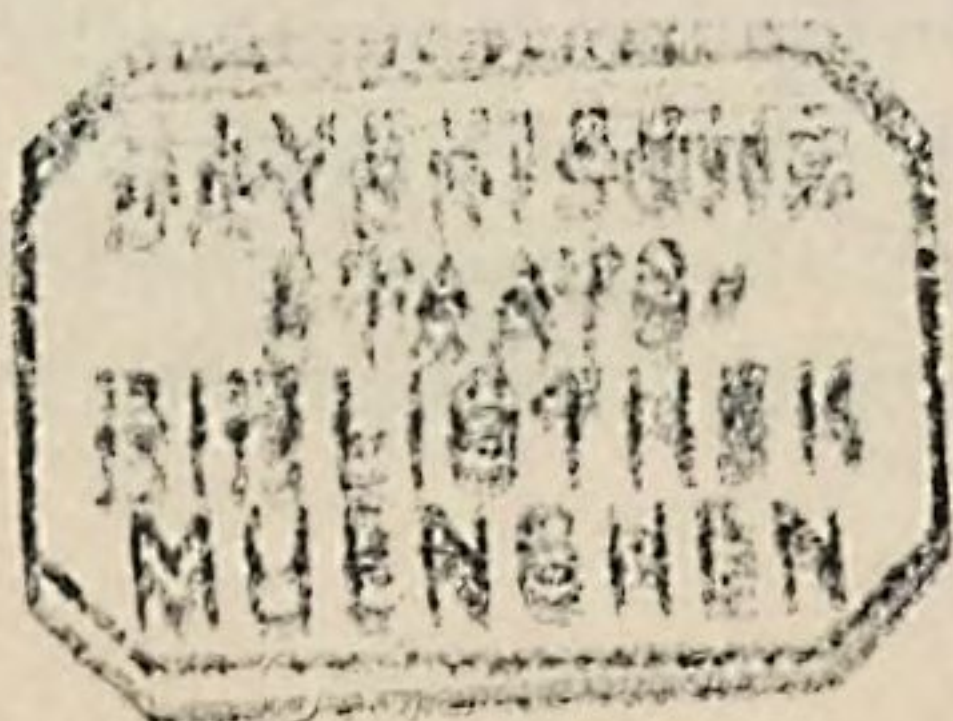
XXXIII.

Not hear? when noise was everywhere! it tolled
Increasing like a bell. Names in my ears,
Of all the lost adventurers my peers,—
How such a one was strong, and such was bold,
And such was fortunate, yet each of old
Lost, lost! one moment knelled the woe of years.

XXXIV.

There they stood, ranged along the hill-sides, met
To view the last of me, a living frame
For one more picture! in a sheet of flame
I saw them and I knew them all. And yet
Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set,
And blew “*Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came.*”

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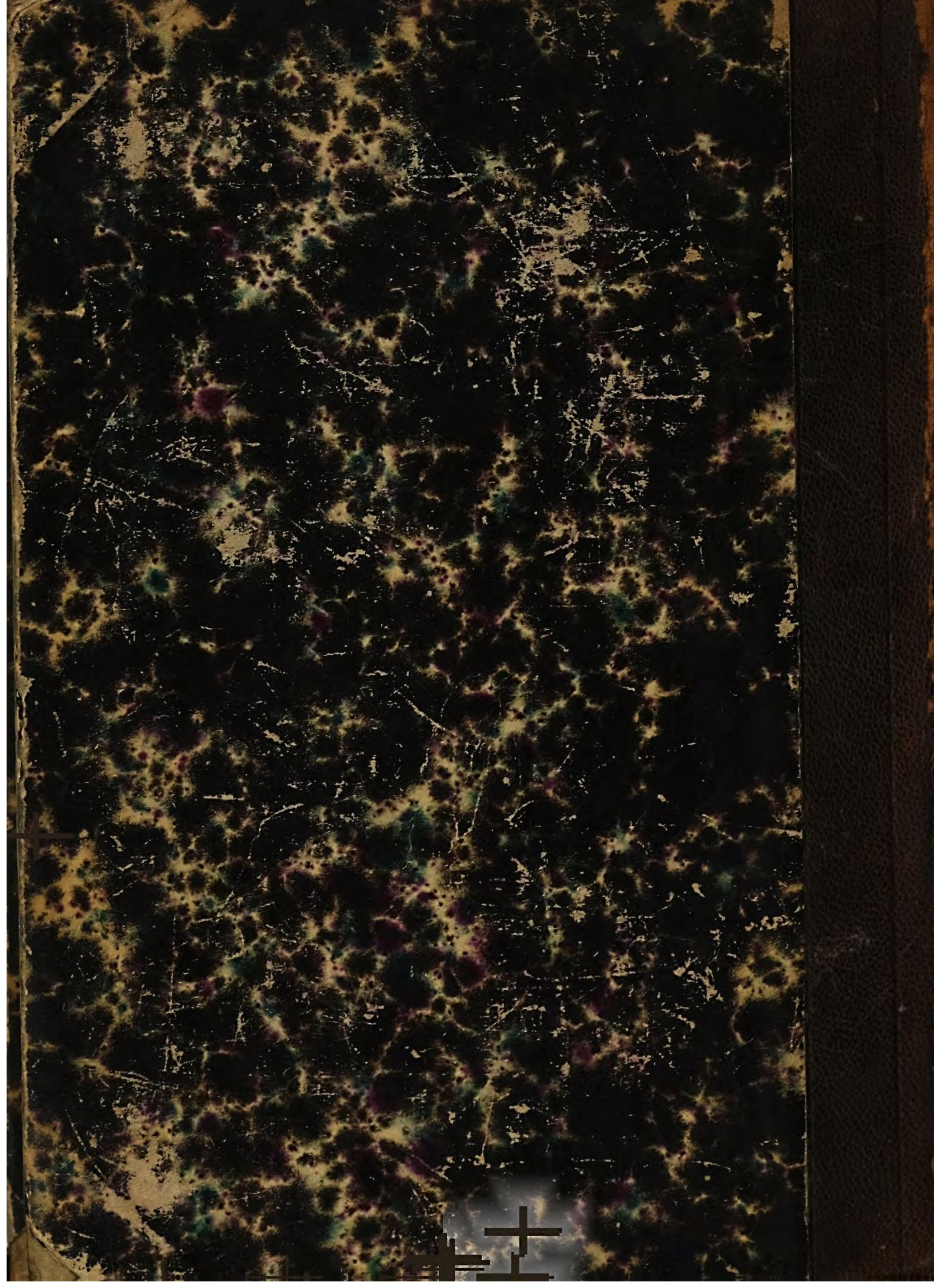
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